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# Juliette

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The Marquis de Sade was an unfortunate man who abused his unique gifts. But in the rationalizations for his perversions we find many brilliant revelations. He discussed the struggle for existence in Darwinian terms. He was the first one to investigate the anthropological background of sex mores, a century and a half before Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict. He anticipated Freud's theory of the development of conscience.

"One must be strong and hard when one desires to be wicked," de Sade wrote. This will always remain true even during our age of emancipation. Man seeks to condemn what he fails to understand.

*—from the introduction*
*by Franklin Klaf, M.D., M.P.H.*

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A LANCER SPECIAL

# MARQUIS DE SADE

# JULIETTE

## or, Vice Amply Rewarded

This edition is a revised and edited abridgment of Pieralessandro Casavini's translation of *Juliette* by the Marquis de Sade.

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**JULIETTE**

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# Introduction

# ABOUT *JULIETTE* AND THE MARQUIS DE SADE

"Juliette" is the sister of Justine, the heroine of de Sade's best selling classic. The book detailing her adventures is the testament of the most depraved literary genius of the past two hundred years.

The celebrated exponent of violence as an aid to sexual pleasure wrote what he believed. The Marquis de Sade abandoned his family, lashed out at the golden rule, antagonized the law, attacked the church, and spent the greater part of his life in prison. He finally ended his tortured existence in the insane asylum at Charenton in 1814, as Napoleon's empire collapsed for the first time at Fontainebleau.

Why should the modern reader pay serious attention to the writings of a man with such an infamous record? The answer is easily found. Donatien Alphonse François,

Marquis de Sade, was more than just another pervert who lent his name to a peculiar variant of human behavior. He is regarded as a pioneer of modern sex psychology, and his ideas inspired many contemporary French writers and novelists.

*See* (*1*) *Dawes, C. P. THE MARQUIS DE SADE, 1927.*

(*2*) *Gorer, G. THE LIFE AND IDEAS OF THE MARQUIS DE SADE, 1953.*

(*3*) *DeBeauvoir, Simone. MUST WE BURN DE SADE?, 1953.*

De Sade was an individualist who believed in free use of the instincts for sensual satisfaction. Men and women, he said, "are helpless before the power of nature." Laws were artificial creations of men to be changed when society achieved a different vision of existence. The Marquis' ideas are similar to those of Hume, Locke, and other philosophers of the Enlightenment. He was able to understand the march of modern science even though he lived during the era of Romanticism.

De Sade's theories of perception and of objective vs. real existence have been hailed by present-day Existentialists. The 18th-century deviate speculated on man's faith, the meaning of death, the universal equation, and on the search for a soul. After

his first conviction in 1778 for wild, grotesque excesses in sexual acting out, he was imprisoned at Vincennes, then transferred to the Bastille. De Sade used his initial term as a guest of the state to do careful research. All of his books are painstakingly documented with original source material.

The author of "Juliette" became thoroughly familiar with the tradition of sadomasochistic literature from the time of Fanny Hill down to his own decade. "Juliette" like her English counterparts, begins her strange career in a school where she receives instruction from a headmistress. After this basic training she becomes involved in a series of loosely structured adventures, held together by her creator's personal crusade against 18th century morality.

Freed in April, 1790, De Sade attempted to exist in a nation preoccupied with Political rather than social revolution. Like many of his contemporaries, he failed to comprehend what George Le Febvre and others have recently proven—The French Revolution was precipitated by a restless middle class which sought to achieve higher status. Not only was the perverted Nobleman an ex-convict, he was an emigré in his own society.

The Marquis revised several of the manu-

scripts he had written in prison, and resorted to exaggeration in order to attract attention. So much scurrilous writing was published during the period from 1790 to 1800 that the reading public became jaded. De Sade had many competitors; especially Restif de la Bretonne, who became widely known as "The Rousseau of the Gutter." Bretonne even wrote a book titled, "The Anti Justine," in rebuttal to De Sade's "Justine." His chief contribution was an eight volume work called "Nights of Paris," describing the orgies of the aristocracy. When his name was submitted for membership to the French academy in 1795, the application was turned down with the terse comment, "Restif de la Bretonne has genius but no taste."

De Sade was not discouraged by public apathy. He continued writing about his own tortured aberrations, combined with violent scenes conjured up by a vivid imagination. The money he made as a writer was barely enough for economic survival. Finally, in a desperate bid for fame, he penned an attack on Napoleon, who had just been elected First Consul. Napoleon retaliated by issuing an order for his arrest and was not amused when he received a complimentary set of De Sade's collected works.

The Marquis remained in confinement to the end of his life. As his knowledge continually deepened, he finally became known as the immoralist of the deviate. Belated fame did not gain him his freedom, even after he was too old to cause any harm. Napoleon, the self-styled "Child of the Revolution," had no use for a perverted remnant of the Ancien Régime.

But, just as Napoleon won battles and lost campaigns, the Marquis de Sade lost the initial battle only to gain final acceptance. A century later Pierre Jouve emphasized the sexual impulse as the basic force in his novels, showing the conflict between the tyranny of instinct and spiritual needs. In 1937 Roger Martin Du Gard won the Nobel Prize for his drama "Un Taciturne," which deals with a brother's illicit passion for his sister. Using the inspiration of De Sade, Du Gard achieved an international reputation.

Du Gard has been attacked by the group of existentialists, but they agree on the importance of the infamous Marquis. The current French hero Jean Genêt has received widespread support from all literary camps during a career which closely resembles that of the 18th century deviate. No one can predict when De Sade's influence will cease, if ever.

The Marquis de Sade was an unfortunate man who abused his unique gifts. But in the rationalizations for his perversions we find many brilliant revelations. He discussed the struggle for existence in Darwinian terms. He championed the sexual and social freedom of women. He was the first one to investigate the anthropological background of sex mores, a century and a half before Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict. He anticipated Freud's theory of the development of conscience.

"One must be strong and hard when one desires to be wicked," De Sade wrote. This will always remain true even during our age of emancipation. Man seeks to condemn what he fails to understand.

—Franklin Klaf, M.D., M.P.H.

# JULIETTE

## or, Vice Amply Rewarded

# TOME I

'Twas at Panthémont we were brought up, Justine and I, there that we received our education. The name of that celebrated retreat is not unfamiliar to you; nor does it require telling that for many a long year the prettiest and most libertine women gracing Paris have regularly emerged from that Ecole des Filles. Euphrosiné, the young lady in whose footsteps I was eager to follow and who, dwelling close by my own parent's home, had fled her father's household to fling herself into libertinage, had been my boon companion at Panthémont. As 'twas from her and from a certain instructrice, a friend of hers, that I acquired the basic precepts of the morality which, as you listened to the tales my sister has just finished recounting, you were somewhat surprised to find in a person of my young years, it would seem to me that before anything else I ought to tell you something about those women, and to provide you with a circumstantial account of those earlier moments of my life when, seduced, corrupted by that pair of sirens, the seed destined to flower into vices without number, was sown in the depths of my soul.

The instructrice I refer to was called Madame Delbène. For five years she had been the abbess of the house and was nearing her thirtieth year when I made her acquaintance. To be prettier than she were a thing impossible; a fit model to any artist, she had a sweet, celestial countenance, fair tresses, large blue eyes where shone something tender and inviting, a figure copied after one of the Graces. The victim of ambition, young Delbène had already passed a dozen years shut up in a cloister in order that an elder brother, whom she detested, might be rendered wealthier by the dowry their parents were thus spared from having to set aside for her. Imprisoned at an age when the passions begin to assert themselves clamorously, although none of this had been of her choosing, for she'd then been fond of the world and of men in general, it was only by mastering herself, by coming triumphant through the severest tests, that she at last decided to give over and obey. Very precocious, having conned all the philosophers, having meditated prodigiously, Delbène, while accepting this condemnation to retirement, had all the same kept two or three friends by her. They came to visit her, to console her; and as she was exceedingly rich, they continued to furnish her all the literature and all the delights she could desire, even those which were to do the most to fire her imagination, already very lively and little cooled by the effects of seclusion.

As for Euphrosiné, she was fifteen when I became attached to her; and she had been Mme. Delbène's pupil a year and a half when the two of them proposed that I enter their society—it was the same day I entered into my thirteenth year. Euphrosiné's complexion was somewhat less than white, she was tall for her age, very slender, had engaging eyes, considerable spirit and vivacity, but in looks she was no match for our Head-Mistress, and was far less interesting.

I have no need to say that amongst recluse women the thirst for the voluptuous is the sole motive for close friendship: they are attached one to the other and not by virtue. One is pleased by her who soaks one at sight, and becomes intimate of her. Endowed with the most energetic temperament, I had, starting at the age of nine,

accustomed my fingers to respond to whatever arose in my mind of desires, and from that period onward I aspired to nothing but the happiness of finding the occasion for instruction and to launch myself into a career the gates unto which my native forwardness had already flung wide, and with such agreeable effects. Euphrosiné and Delbène were soon to offer me what I was seeking. Eager to undertake my education, the Head-Mistress one day invited me to luncheon. Euphrosiné was there; the weather was incredibly warm, and this excessive ardor of the sun afforded them an excuse for the disarray I found them in: apart from an undergarment of transparent lawn maintained by nothing more than a large bow of pink ribbon, they were perfectly nude.

"Since you first arrived at this establishment," Mme. Delbène began, kissing me rather carelessly upon the forehead, her eye and hand betraying a certain restlessness, "I have had an unabating desire to make your intimate acquaintance. You are very attractive. You appear to me to be in possession of some wit and aptitude, and young maids of your sort have a very definite place in my heart —do you blush, little angel? But I forbid you to blush! Modesty is an illusion—resulting from what? 'tis the result of nought but our cultural manners and our upbringing, it is what is known as a conventional habit. Nature having created man and woman naked, that she could have implanted in them an aversion or a shame thus to appear, is unthinkable.

Then those two minxes, laughing right merrily, stepped up to me and soon had me in a state identical to theirs; whereupon Mme. Delbène's kisses assumed a completely different character.

"Oh, but my Juliette is lovely!" cried she, admiringly; "see how those delicious little breasts have begun to heave! Euphrosiné, I do declare she's better fleshed there than you are . . . and, would you believe it? she's barely thirteen."

Our charming Head-Mistress' fingers were tickling my nipples, and her tongue quivered in my mouth. She was not slow to observe her caresses were having so powerful an influence upon my senses that I was in serious danger of being entirely overcome.

And directly flinging away the filmy costume which had enveloped her, she revealed herself to our eyes, lovely as that Venus, sea-risen goddess who exacted their homage from the Greeks. It were impossible better to be made, to have a skin more white, more sweet, to have more beauteous curves, forms better pronounced. Euphrosiné, who imitated her almost at once, delivered fewer charms to my view: she was less plump than Mme. Delbène; rather darker in her skin, she would perhaps have pleased less universally; but what eyes! what vivacity! Stirred by such a quantity of wonders, earnestly solicited by the two women they belonged to, besought to follow their example and be rid of all modesty's restraints, you may be very certain that I yielded. Her head reeling from sublimest drunkenness, Delbène bore me to her bed and devoured me with her kisses. Now and again she paused to gaze at me, to contemplate me in these throes of pleasure.

"The beautiful creature!" the lesbian exclaimed. "Oh, was there ever a more inspiring child! Have at it, Euphrosiné, my love, lay on, I want to die drunk on her! Quick now, we'll change about, let's vary what we're doing," she cried a moment later; "you must wish for something in return, dear Euphrosiné? But how shall I be able to repay you for the pleasures you're giving me!"

"Do unto me everything I have done unto you," spake she in a thickened voice, "the both of you. I shall lie in your arms, Juliette. I shall kiss your mouth, our tongues shall intertwine . . . shall strain . . ."

O with what liberality we did repay her in the one coin she valued! It were not in human power more passionately to labor at giving a woman pleasure . . . impossible to imagine one who had a greater appetite for it. The thing was done at last.

"My angel," that charming creature said to me, "I attempt to express my delight at having come to know you, and words fail me. You are a veritable discovery, from now on I propose to associate you with all my pleasures and you shall find that we may avail ourselves of some very poignant ones despite the fact male company is, strictly speaking, forbidden us. Ask of Euphrosiné, whether she is content with me."

"Oh my beloved, allow my kisses to speak for me!" exclaimed our young friend as she cast herself upon Delbène's breast; "'tis you I am indebted to for an understanding of myself and of the meaning of my existence. You have trained my mind, you have rescued it from the darkness wherein childhood prejudices enshrouded it. Thanks alone to you I have achieved being in this world. Lucky Juliette if you will condescend to lavish similar attentions upon her!"

"Yes," Mme. Delbène replied, "why yes, I am anxious to take her education in hand. Just as I have told you, I should like to cleanse her of all those infamous follies which soil the whole of life's felicity, I should like to guide her back to Nature's fold and doctrine, and cause her to see that all the fables whereby they have sought to bewitch her mind and clog her energies are in actuality chitty poor stuff worthy of nought but arch derision. But now to luncheon, my friends, we'd best refresh ourselves."

A month was so spent; at its end Euphrosiné, her brain nicely crazed by libertinage, left the school, then bade farewell to her family and went straightway off to practice all the disorders of frenzied whoring and low licence. Later, she returned and paid us a visit; she figured her situation, and we being too corrupted to find anything amiss in the career she was pursuing, pity was furthest from our thoughts and our last wish was to discourage her from forging ahead.

"I do declare, she has managed very well," Mme. Delbène remarked to me, "a hundred times over I have yearned to respond to the same call, and indeed I surely would have had my taste for men been strong enough to surmount this uncommon liking I have for women. Nevertheless, I do recognize that one may take an interest in men; it is no mystery to me that one will now and then do everything under the sun to lay hands on them; whatever is connected with libertinage makes powerful sense to me . . . My fancy has roved very far. Who knows, perhaps I have even gone beyond what one may imagine, have been gripped by wants whose satisfaction defies all conception?

"The fundamental tenet of my philosophy, Juliette," went on Mme. Delbène who, since the loss of Euphrosiné,

had become more and more fond of me, "is scorn for public opinion. You simply have no idea, my dear one, to what point I am contemptuously indifferent to whatever may be said about me. And, pray tell, what beneficial or other influence can the vulgar fool's opinion have upon our happiness? For the human conscience," continued that deep-learned woman, "is not at all times and everywhere the same, but rather almost always the direct product of a given society's manners and of a particular climate and geography. Is it not so, for example, that the same acts the Chinese do not in any sense consider inadmissible, would cause us to shudder here in France? The sooner one sets to work adopting the philosophy one intends to be guided by, the better, since that philosophy alone supplies its form to the conscience, and our conscience is responsible for governing and regulating all the actions we perform in life."

"Heavens!" I cried, "have you carried indifference to the point of not caring in the slightest about your reputation?"

"Quite, I do not care about it in the slightest," Mme. Delbène answered. "I might even confess that I take a greater inner pleasure from my conviction that this reputation is extremely bad, than I would reap from knowing it was good. Oh Juliette, never forget this: a good reputation is a valueless encumbrance. It cannot ever reimburse us for what in sacrifices it costs us."

"But," I objected, "were I to make these maxims mine, Mme. Delbène, I greatly fear I should have to flout far too many conventions."

"Why indeed, my dear," she retorted, "I believe I'd prefer to have you tell me you greatly fear you'd taste too many pleasures. And what precisely are these conventions? Shall we inspect the matter soberly? Social ordinances in virtually every instance are promulgated by those who never deign to consult the members of society, they are restrictions we all of us cordially hate, they are common sense's contradictions: absurd myths lacking any reality save in the eyes of the fools who don't mind submitting to them, fairy tales which in the eyes of reason and intelligence merit scorn only. . . . Have confidence in me. Your candor and naïveté indicate you are in singular need

of a tutor. For very few is life a bed of roses: only heed me, and you'll be one of those who, with the thorns that must be there, will find a goodly number of flowers in her path."

I was told Mme. Delbène poisoned the minds of nearly every girl and thanks to her advice at least fifteen or sixteen of them had already gone the way of Euphrosiné. 'Twas, she assured me, an unprincipled, lawless, a faithless, and impudent brazen creature who flaunted her wicked notions; vigorous measures would long ere this have been taken against her were it not for her influential position and distinguished birth. These exhortations meant nothing to me: a single one of Delbène's kisses, a single phrase from her had a greater effect upon me than all the weapons employed against us. Even had it meant being dragged over the precipice, it seemed to me I should have preferred definitive ruin at her side to celebrity in another's sight. O my friends! there is a certain perversity than which no other nourishment is tastier; drawn thither by Nature . . . if for a moment Reason's cold hand waves us back, Lust's fingers bear the dish towards us again, and thereafter we can no longer do without that fare.

But it was shortly that I noticed our amiable Head-Mistress' attentions were not concentrated exclusively on me, and I as quickly perceived that others were wont to co-operate with her in exercises where libertinage had a more preponderant share than piety.

"And will you take lunch with me tomorrow?" she enquired one day. "I expect Elizabeth, Flavie, Madame de Volmar and Madame de Sainte-Elme. We'll be six in all; we ought surely to be able to accomplish some truly startling things, I dare say."

"Goodness!" I exclaimed. "Do you amuse yourself with all those women?"

"Of course. But you mustn't for one instant suppose I am limited to them. There are thirty instructrices in our establishment, I have had commerce with twenty-two; we have eighteen new students: I have still to make the acquaintance of one of them; and of the sixty pensionnaires presently with us, only three have resisted me so far. Whenever a new one arrives I simply have to get my

hands on her: I accord her one week, never longer, to think over my proposals. How very fortunate for society that I restrict myself to this dilute form of evil-doing: eh, what with my proclivities and principles, I could perhaps adopt another which might easily prove more of a nuisance to the world."

"And what would you do, my gentlest one?"

"Who can tell? Do you not realize that the effects of an imagination so depraved as mine are like unto the impetuous waters of a river in flood?"

"Do you not ascribe to Nature," I suggested to my interlocutress, "what ought rather to be considered the result of your depravation?"

"Now heed me well, little light of my life," quoth the Head-Mistress; "it's early yet, our friends aren't due to come till six and before they arrive I can perhaps reply to some of your frivolous notions."

We each sat down.

"In that our unique knowledge of Nature's inspirations," began Mme. Delbène, "reaches us through that inferior sensory we call the conscience, it is by analyzing this latter we shall rationally and profitably sound Nature's operations—which, in us, are impulsions—and which fatigue, torment, or bring enjoyment to the conscience.

"The child is beset by guilt directly he disobeys instructions—and the child will continue to suffer pangs of remorse until such time as having vanquished prejudice, he discovers there is no real evil in the thing his education has induced him to abhor.

"For feelings of guilt, once again, are nought but the distillations, the effluvia of a prejudice produced by fear of what may befall us for having done any conceivable kind of thing forbidden for who knows what vague or flimsy reason. Guilt, is merely an unpleasant reminiscence; it outcrops from the customs and conventions one happens to have adopted, but it never results from, never has any connection with, the character of the deed one happens to have performed.

"Were this not so, how could one ever succeed in stifling remorse, in overcoming guilt? Remorse does nothing to make the act less evil, since remorse always comes

after the fact; very rarely does remorse prevent the fact from recurring. But these reflexions are not to be confused with remorse, for true remorse, real remorse, is the pain produced by the hurt one has done oneself: which distinction brings to light the vast difference between these two sentiments, guilt and remorse, and at the same time reveals the usefulness of the one and the inanity of the other. He who deprives himself of anything he enjoy —that would be similar to the lunacy of the man who because a heavy dinner troubled his digestion, were to refuse forever the pleasures of good eating.

"O Juliette! if like myself you would live happily in crime—and, my beloved, I say, you would find in crime the same happiness that is mine. Do this, and lo! as though miraculously, new perspectives, a new universe shall appear before you, a consuming and delicious conflagration will glide into your nerves, it will make boil the electrically-charged liquor in which the life principle has its seat."

"Oh my friend!" I exclaimed, "how deeply in your debt I shall be! The things you have just told me are so very novel, and so engaging—I had no previous inkling of them, truly. Oh, can you divine the pleasure you give me in promising to broaden my understanding! I owe all my modest store of impiety to Nature's liberal suggestions."

"Ah! obey her promptings, my darling—they're such as shall never mislead you."

"Do you know," I continued, "the lecture you have just given me, it is a very compelling one . . . full of bold ideas. May I say that it is rare to find one so well informed at your age?"

"The day will come when you shall know everything about me," said the Head-Mistress rising from her chair.

"And why must it be postponed? are you afraid of—"

"Merely of horrifying you."

"Then fear not, my friend."

But the approach of company prevented Delbène from touching what I was afire to know.

"Tush," said she, putting a finger to her lips, "let's turn our thoughts to pleasure. Kiss me, Juliette. I promise to confide in you on some later day."

Our associates had arrived; I must portray them for you.

Mme. de Volmar, just twenty years old, tall, slender, very fair of skin, chestnut hair, the loveliest body imaginable: Volmar, blessed with such a host of charms, was understandably one of Mme. Delbène's most cherished disciples and, excepting only herself, the most libertine of the ladies who were about to participate in our orgies.

Saint-Elme was a girl of seventeen, very animated, with a charming countenance, sparkling eyes, well-moulded breasts, and an air of general voluptuousness. Elizabeth and Flavie were both pensionnaires: the first could not have been past thirteen, the second was sixteen. Elizabeth's face was sensitive, its features were unusually delicate; the lines of her body were agreeable to see, its curves already pronounced. As for Flavie, she had surely the most heavenly face one could hope to find in this world: nowhere did there exist a prettier smile, lovelier teeth, more beautiful hair; nor was there another who possessed a more engaging figure, a softer and clearer skin. Ah, my friends! had I to paint the Goddess of Flowers, 'twould be Flavie I'd select for my model.

The introductions and the customary compliments were without undue formality; each member of the society, fully aware of what had occasioned the forgathering, was impatient to proceed to business; but those ladies' exchanges did, I must declare, astonish me. Even in the middle of a brothel one is not likely to overhear libertine language more gracefully and more casually uttered than it was by these young women; and nothing could have been more pleasant than the contrast between their modest demeanor, their reserve abroad, and the energetic indecency they displayed throughout these luxurious assemblies.

"Delbène," quoth Mme. Volmar upon making her entrance, "I defy you to wheedle me into discharging today—oh, but I'm done up, my dear, I was rioting with Fontenille. Ah, my adorable one, we accomplished marvels!"

"Amazing, aren't they?" Delbène remarked: "well, I

trust we'll perform a few thousand times more extraordinary this afternoon."

"Then let's have at it!" cried Sainte-Elme. "I'm not like Volmar, I slept alone," and, raising her skirts: "d'ye see? Isn't it plain, the treatment it desperately needs?"

"Stay," said the Head-Mistress, "be not over-hasty. This is an initiatory ceremony: I am admitting Juliette into our college, and she must undergo the prescribed ritual."

"Who? Juliette?" said Flavie. "Why, I hadn't noticed —Juliette? I don't believe I've met this pretty thing before," she murmured, approaching me. "Have you any skill my princess?" she enquired, bestowing a kiss upon my lips. "Are you libertine? somewhat of a lesbian, like the rest of us?"

And without further ado, the scoundrel laid hands simultaneously upon my breasts and my sex.

"Let her be," said Volmar who, baring my behind, was inspecting my buttocks; "let her be, she must first be initiated before we put her to use."

"I say, Delbène," spoke up Elizabeth, "will you look at Volmar kissing Juliette."

"You know very well," Sainte-Elme rejoined, "that Volmar's an arrant male: she's well outfitted and, destined to insult Nature whichever be the sex she adopts, the whore's got either to play the nymphomaniac or the sodomite: with her, there's no median alternative."

"No doubt of it," she went on, "the sweet little bitch is trimly made."

"If you please, ladies, if you please," protested Delbène, seeking to re-establish order, "one moment, I beg of you—"

"Well, be quick!" Sainte-Elme gasped, "I'm ready to run! Why the delay? Off with your clothes, sweet friends—"

And, had you been there, the next instant you'd have seen six young damsels, each more lovely than the day, fall to admiring each other mutually . . . to caressing one another's nude bodies, and amongst one another to composing the most varied and diverting groups.

The extreme respect in which the Head-Mistress' commands were held made for the completest punctuality in

their execution. All these creatures being libertine to the core. As they stepped up by order of age, Elizabeth was the first to present herself. The fair little wench scrutinized every part of me and after having covered me with kisses she slipped in between my thighs, rubbed against me, and we both swooned away together. Flavie came next: her operations bespoke a greater science. Then Sainte-Elme approaches, and lies down upon the bed. Volmar devours me with kisses.

After this last incursion, I went to take the post awaiting me upon Delbène's body.

"By the Almighty!" Delbène panted, extricating herself, and flushed as red as a bacchante, "let's carry on with the game: each of you is now to take her place on the couch, Juliette will dally with you in whatever way she prefers, you'll have to cede to her demands. But as she is still new at the sport, I propose to act as her mentor: the group will then form around her as it did around me."

"Right willingly!" I cried, sodomizing my instructess. "Since," I said while engaged, "since the group is to form around me, let's not tarry. My good Volmar," I said, addressing the latter, "you've positively no idea how my temperament responds to all species of excitation."

The pleasures of the table succeeded those of love: a superb repast was awaiting us. Divers kinds of wine and liqueur put a bright hilarity in our heads, we returned to our libertine disporting. We divided into three couples. Sainte-Elme, Delbène and Volmar, the most advanced in years, each chose. Delbène appointed me to be hers; Elizabeth fell to Sainte-Elme, Flavie to Volmar. The couples were so disposed that each could enjoy a view of the pleasures of the two others. Truly, the reader is little apt to imagine the least part of what we did. Oh, that Sainte-Elme, how delicious she was! Wildly enthusiastic over each other, there was nothing we did not contrive, no fancy we failed to enact; then finally we all six knit again in a compact group, and the concluding two hours of this voluptuous spree were so lascivious that one may wonder whether so many lewd goings-on are ever matched in any whorehouse.

I was struck by, and must not fail to mention, this: the extreme care shown for the younger pensionnaires' maidenheads.

"Their honor resides therein," Delbène explained to me when I questioned her about the thing. "We do, by all means, wish to amuse ourselves with these girls, but why ruin them? Why cause them to detest the memory of the moments they passed in our midst? No, we have that virtue, and however corrupt you suppose us to be, we never compromise our friends."

Delbène shortly perceived that I preferred Sainte-Elme to her. Indeed, I did adore that charming girl; I simply could not leave her side; but as she had infinitely less wit than the Head-Mistress, another yearning, equally invincible, always brought me back to her.

"Consumed as you appear to be by the passion to deflower a maid, or to be deflowered yourself," the inimitable Delbène said to me one day, "I have no doubt but that Sainte-Elme has already decided, or may easily be induced, to grant you these pleasures. Need she hesitate? She runs no risk: she hates men. But you, Juliette, once bereft of your token, you'll be forever debarred from marriage. Think then, and believe me: untold misfortunes may well be the consequence of a flaw in the part you perhaps too lightly think of damaging. However, heed me, my angel, you know that I adore you, give up that Sainte-Elme, take me instead and I'll satisfy all the pleasures you long for in a trice. You have only to select her in the whole école whose first fruits you covet, and I myself shall make away with yours. . . . There'll be some material injuries, needless to say. But fear not, I'll arrange everything. Just how 'tis managed is a great secret; if you would have it revealed to you, I must first have your most solemn oath that, as of this moment, you'll speak not another word to Sainte-Elme. And if you break faith with me there will be no limit to my vengeance."

Far too fond of this bewitching creature to wish to compromise her and, in addition, burning to taste the pleasure Delbène encouraged me to hope for if I abandoned Sainte-Elme, I promised everything.

" 'Tis well," said Delbène a month later, during which interval she put me to the test, "have you made your choice? Whom is it to be?"

"My choice is Laurette."

Her youth . . . her pretty little wide-awake pert face, her liveliness, her high birth, everything about her incensed me . . . inflamed me; and seeing no important obstacle to success—for this young orphan had no protector apart from an elderly uncle living at a hundred leagues' distance from Paris—the Head-Mistress assured me I could consider as already sacrificed the victim my perfidious desires were immolating in advance.

We appointed a day; on the eve of the drama Delbène summoned me to her study to spend the night in her embraces.

"I fear," said she, "lest you proceed in too great haste, my child. Your heart, beguiled by your mind, has not yet reached the stage at which I would prefer to see it. These superstitious infamies are still harassing you—I wager 'tis so. Listen to me, Juliette, lend me your undivided attention and make an effort so that in future, with an effrontery equal to mine and without any qualms whatever, you will be able to carry your libertinage, anchored upon a substructure of reliable principles, to it matters not what extreme.

"Imagination is the true cause of all our errors. Now the most abundant source of these errors lies in our ascribing an independent existence to the objects of these inner perceptions and, more, in our supposing that they exist outside of ourselves and separately just as we conceive of them as separate from one another. To make myself clear to you, upon this separate idea, upon this idea born of the object which makes its appearance before the perceiver, I'll bestow the term *objective idea* in order to distinguish it from the impression the object generates in the perceiver, which I shall call the *real idea.* It is of utmost importance that these two varieties of existence not be confused; neglect to characterize these distinctions, and the way is open to boundless error. The infinitely diminishing point, so necessary to geometry, belongs to the class of *objective existences;* solid bodies to that of *real existences.*

Our very perceptions themselves are distinct from ourselves, and are also distinct from one another, if it be upon present objects they bear and upon their relations and the relations of these relations."

"My dear," Mme. Delbène continued, "the universe runs itself, and the eternal laws inherent in Nature suffice, without any first cause or prime mover, to produce all that is and all that we know; the perpetual movement of matter explains everything: why need we supply a motor to that which is ever in motion? I affirm indeed that, in my view, the absolute contrary holds, and I believe I have proven my point. We need not fret if we find nothing to substitute for chimeras, and above all let us never accept as cause for what we do not comprehend, something else we comprehend even less.

"I'll surely have little trouble uprooting the prejudices and superstitions that have been planted in you ever since the day when, at a tender age, you first heard them expound their theories on the principle of life; is there really anything more extraordinary than this superiority to animals which humans arrogate to themselves?

"O Juliette!" this rigorous logician pursued with all the energy of a passionate conviction, "O my beloved friend, doubt thereof there may be none: when we die, we die. Inside and out, through and through; and once the Fates have severed the thread, the human frame is no more than a mass inert, unable to produce those movements which, collectively, constituted its life. What is more natural and simpler than to believe a dead man is dead, over and done with; and what more ludicrous than to believe that when a man is dead he's still alive?"

"I was taught," I volunteered, "that a spirit is a substance lacking extension, incorruptible, and having nothing in common with matter."

"That being the case," my tutor answered at once, "tell me how your soul arranges to be born, to grow, to strengthen itself, to agitate itself and to age and all this abreast the evolution of your body?

"Like a myriad of fools who have entertained the same notions, you'll say that the whole affair is downright mysterious; but, imbeciles that they are, if all these problems are mysteries, they understand nothing about them,

and since they understand nothing about them, how can they make an affirmative decision about the coexistence of what they are incapable of conceiving? In order to believe or affirm something, need you not at least know in what consists the thing you believe and declare to be?"

"But," said I, "is not the dogma of the immortality of the soul comforting to the downtrodden and unlucky? Illusion though it may be, is it not soothing, is it not gladdening? is it not a boon, that man may believe he will be able to survive himself and his woes and someday in heaven taste the bliss this world denied him?"

"But what shall become of me?" I demanded of Mme. Delbène. "I am afraid of this darkness, this eternal annihilation scares me."

"And, pray tell, what were you before birth?" enquired that brilliant woman. "Several unqualifiable lumps of unorganized matter as yet without definite form or at least lacking any form you can hope to remember. Well, you're going to turn back into those same or similar lumps of matter, you're going to become the raw material out of which new beings will be fashioned, and this will happen when natural processes bring it about. Shall you find all this pleasurable? No. Shall you suffer? No. Is there anything truly objectionable here? No; and who on earth would agree to sacrifice all his pleasures in exchange for the certitude of never having to undergo pain? What would he be, if he were able to strike this bargain? An inert, motionless being. And after he dies, what will he be? Exactly the same thing.

"O Juliette, you're going to think me peremptory, somewhat the rebel and an enemy of yokes and handcuffs; but with uncompromising severity, I am going to dismíss this equally absurd and childish obligation which enjoins us *not to do unto others that which unto us we would not have done.* It is the precise contrary Nature recommends, since Nature's single precept is *to enjoy oneself, at the expense of no matter whom.* But at our leisure we shall return to these subjects; for the nonce, let's now put our theories into practice and, after having demonstrated to you that you can do everything without committing a crime, let's commit a villainy or two to convince ourselves that everything can be done."

Electrified by these discourses, I fling myself into my friend's arms; in a thousand little ways I show gratitude for the care she is lavishing upon my education.

"I owe you more than life itself, my beloved Delbène," I cried; "what is an existence without philosophy? Is life worth living when one lies crushed beneath the yoke of lies and stupidity? Come then," I said with great warmth, "I feel worthy of you at last, 'tis upon your breast I take sacred oath never to return to the illusions which through gentle friendship you have just exterminated in me. Continue my instruction, continue to direct my footsteps toward happiness; I entrust myself to your advice; do with me what you will, and be sure of this: that you have never had a disciple more ardent nor more docile than Juliette."

Delbène was beside herself with delight. A thrill marks the inculcation of each principle, a multitude of various feelings are flattered by the sight of others becoming gangrened by the very corruption that rots us. Delbène gave me back all the kisses I showered upon her; she said I was going to become a wayward girl like her, an undisciplined and very disrespectful little whore, that's where I was headed, and her caresses becoming more vibrant, we soon ignited the passions' fire by the bright-burning lamp of philosophy.

"Stay," quoth Delbène, "since you're bent on being deflowered, I'm going to satisfy you straight off."

Crazed with lust, the wench instantly delivers a thundrous blow, then another. Words cannot describe what I suffered; but the lancing pains provoked by this terrible operation soon yielded to the sweetest pleasures. The indefatigable Delbène's fury only increased.

"Retaliate, retaliate," she gasped, "I want to be remunerated in that specie," said she. "I am devoured by lewd desires."

From a doted-upon mistress I immediately turned into the most passionate lover. What transports! No woman fish-flopped more amorously, never was there one carried so far away by pleasure's throes; ten times in succession the slut swooned of ease.

"O my soul's delight!" I said to her, "is it not true, that the greater and individual's wit and instruction, the

better equipped he is to taste the amenities of voluptuousness?"

"Unquestionably," Delbène replied, "the person of superior wit and parts will always be found more apt to libertinage's pleasures."

"I believe that the exceeding delicacy of highly developed organs must also be reckoned as contributory," I went on.

"Nor is that to be doubted either," said Mme. Delbène; "the more highly polished the mirror, the better it receives and the better reflects the objects presented it."

Finally, both of us dry from extreme toil, I reminded my instructress of her promise to me that we deflower Laurette.

"I've not in the least forgotten it," she answered, "the deed is for tonight. When everyone has retired to the dormitories, you'll slip away, so shall Flavie and Volmar. Leave the rest to me; now you're initiated into our mysteries. Be bold, be firm, Juliette, be staunch; there are wonderful things I design to show you."

I took leave of my friend and put in an appearance at the house; but fancy my surprise when I heard it reported that a pensionnaire had just fled. I asked her name. It was Laurette.

"Laurette!" I cried. Then, to myself: "She upon whom I was counting . . . she the thought of whom has hurled me into this state. . . . Perfidious desires, have I then conceived them in vain?"

I request the details, no one is able to provide them; I fly to inform Delbène, her door is shut, I have no way of reaching her before the scheduled hour. Ah, how slowly the time drags away! I hear the bell toll at last; Volmar and Flavie arrived before me, they were already in Delbène's quarters.

May we refresh the reader's memory, who may have forgot that the said Volmar is a charming instructrice of twenty-one years; whilst Flavie is a young pensionnaire and extremely fair of face and figure.

"Alas," I say, addressing myself to the Head-Mistress, "how shall you keep your word to me? Laurette is gone, vanished. Who can replace her?"

And then with a certain sourness:

"Juliette," broke in Mme. Delbène, and her tone was cool, her look stern, "the foremost of amity's laws is that of trust: if, my dear, you wish to be one of us, you can do with more self-control and fewer suspicions. Is it likely —consider now—is it thinkable that I would have promised you a pleasure I lack the means to have you savour? ought you not to think me sufficiently clever . . . ought you not to believe my position in this place powerful enough to guarantee that, since the arranging of these delights depends exclusively upon me, you have never to fear that they be unavailable to you? Tush. Follow us. All's quiet. Did I not tell you that uncommon sights await you?"

Delbène lights a little lantern, she walks ahead, Volmar, Flavie and I follow. We descend into the sanctuary of the dead. I betray a certain uneasiness, Volmar reassures me. Delbène lowers the stone slab above us. We are now in subterranean vaults that serve as sepulture to all the women who have died in the college. We proceed; another stone is swung aside, some fifteen or sixteen downward steps bring us to a low-ceilinged room decorated with much artistry and ventilated by air coming down from the gardens above by a shaft. O my friends! whom do you think I found there . . . Laurette, clad and decked like the vestals they used in olden times to immolate in the shrine of Bacchus; the M. Ducroz, first secretary to a political leader, a man of thirty years, very goodly to look upon, his special employment was the supervision of Panthémont—he was there; so was M. Télème, a handsome dark dog of thirty-six, drama professor to the pensionnaires.

"She is afraid," said Delbène, going toward these two men and presenting me to them: "hear, young innocent," she continued, bestowing kisses upon me, "that our sole motive for congregating in this place is the perpetration of sundry horrors, occasional atrocities. If we thus burrow far down into the realm of the dead, it is to be at the greatest possible remove from the living. When one is a libertine, as depraved, as vicious as are we, one likes to be in the bowels of the earth so as the better to avoid the interference of men and their ridiculous law."

"Heavens!" I cried, much moved, "what are we about to perform in these underground tunnels?"

"Crimes," said Delbène. "We are going to soil ourselves with crimes before your very eyes, we are going to teach you to imitate us. Do you think you'll weaken? Am I mistaken in my confidence in you? I've told these our colleagues that you can be relied upon."

"Still your doubts," I replied energetically, "lay on your hands, I swear to it, whatever you do, it will stir up not a quaver of fear in me."

And, instantly, kisses and fingerings were applied.

"Juliette," the Head-Mistress announced, "we have just afforded you the two greatest pleasures a woman can enjoy; you must be candid now, and tell me which of the two gave you the greater delight."

"Truth to tell, Madame," said I, "each gave me such pleasure I cannot decide which gave me the more. Reverberations are yet going through me of sensations at once so confused and so voluptuous that I would be hard put to assign them their proper origins."

"Then we'd best try it again," Télème observed; "the lovely Juliette will have the goodness to interrogate her sentiments and to favor us with a more exact account thereof."

"Most willingly," I said; "I am of your mind, that 'tis only by beginning afresh that I'll be able to decide."

"Charming, isn't she?" murmured the Head-Mistress. "There's more than enough there to result in the prettiest little whore we've developed in decades."

"Alert in my pleasure-taking for later I should be expected to report on the experience. I swam in a wordless ecstasy."

Télème was the first to try to speak; but his stammers, his gasps much better expressed his disorder than his ideas.

Further outpourings terminated this second experimental affray; and then I was questioned.

"O my heart," I answered Delbène—it was she conducted the inquest—"since I must reply truthfully, I am young in years and in experience, shy, unacquainted with and perhaps ill-made for the pleasures wherewith I have just been gratified beyond all common measure; it were

wholly possible that I be mistaken upon the kind and violence of these pleasures themselves, but you demand to know what I have felt and I have told you."

"Come, give me a kiss, my angel," spake Mme. Delbène, "you are a splendid girl and in fitting company. Ah, no doubt of it," she proceeded enthusiastically, "woe betide those simple-minded, faint-hearted chits who, lacking significantly in imagination, *dare* not attempt the true adventure. Impoverished creatures, these, they shall never be worthy to sacrifice to Venus, and never shall the Goddess of Saphos reward them with her favors!"

"Laurette, came hither, just so—'tis good, lie quiet there before me while I have at you as my impulses bid me."

We soon began to notice that the little Laurette was the target less of Delbène's caresses than of her rage: she was becoming covered with bites, pinches, scratches.

Delbène finally screamed, "Enough, 'tis done . . . let's sit down now, let's talk a bit. . . . There's more to it than just experiencing sensations, they must also be analyzed. Sometimes it is as pleasant to discuss as to undergo them; and when one has reached the limit of one's physical means, one may then exploit one's intellect. We'll make a circle. Calm yourself, Juliette, you have a worried air—are you still afraid that we'll fail you? There's your victim," she said, pointing to Laurette. "Rely upon a libertine's promise, as you may upon his excessive behavior. Télème, and you, Ducroz, place yourselves close by me."

"I do declare," were Delbène's next words, spoken once she had reached the state appropriate for holding discourse, "in the world I wonder at nothing so much as at the moral education girls are commonly given. It would appear as if their one aim were to instill notions and doctrines that contradict all the natural impulses in our maidens. Is anyone able to tell me, for I sincerely wish to know, of what use a prudent well-behaved woman can be to society? and whether there is anything more superfluous than the practice of this virtue which, with every passing day, only further numbs and mines our sex?

For what purpose has Nature created every human being? Is it not for giving mutual aid one to the other,

and consequently for giving one another all the pleasures it is in one's power to dispense? Conventions, ah, conventions—may I be so bold as to ask you what they are? If I am not mistaken, the term applies to the kind of behavior observed by the individuals of a nation at home and in public. Now you will surely agree that these conventions ought to be based upon furtherance of individual happiness; if they do not ensure it, they are ridiculous; if they are harmful to it, they are atrocious, and an enlightened nation must set straightway to work rectifying these conventions directly it is manifest that they no longer conduce to the general welfare. Long live those people who, dwelling in ignorance only esteem the young persons of our sex in accordance with the disorderliness they exhibit in their conduct! Only in these multiple extravagances does a girl's true virtue reside; the more she gives herself, the more lovable she is, the more happiness she distributes the more she is instrumental to her countrymen's happiness. They are sordid barbarians, these husbands who stick by the vain pleasure of plucking a rose: 'tis despotism, they claim this right at the expense of other men's well-being. An end to this disesteem for the girl who, having no previous acquaintance with them, has not been able to wait to make them a gift of the most precious thing she has and who, if she has heeded Nature's promptings, has had every reason for not waiting.

Let it become an everyday affair and you'll see the prejudice collapse and disappear, you'll see chastity cease to be a virtue and adultery cease to be a crime. Come, come! what wrong do I commit, what injury do I do when, encountering some attractive creature, I say:

" 'Pray avail me of that part of your body which is capable of giving me a moment's satisfaction, and, if you are so inclined, amuse yourself with whatever part of mine may be agreeable to you'?

"What's this idle talk about liberty, equality, fraternity, what's this unity and brotherhood amongst men so long as everyone, brothers, fathers, mothers, wives go on struggling against each other? Unity means universality.

"Ponder the matter and you'll discover that there has never been any other cause for all our difficulties. One power, quietly gathering strength, has always ended up trying to overwhelm the other, and has always succeeded.

"O tender creatures, divine artifact wrought for the pleasures of men, cease to believe that you were made for the enjoyment of only one man; utterly unafraid, beneath your proud heel grind to dust these absurd ties which, chaining you in the arms of a husband, are bar to the happiness you await from the lover you cherish. Consider rather, that it is only by resisting his advances that you outrage Nature. Having made you the more sensitive, the more fiery of the two sexes, in your heart Nature ingrained the desire to indulge unrestrainedly all your passions. O you women who are made to be loved, the scantiest pleasure provided by a lover outweighs all the relief you'll derive from self-abuse: sheer illusions, those solitary pleasure-takings, no one believes in them, no one will recognize your valor, you'll earn no one's thanks, no one's gratitude; and in every case destined to be a victim, you'll perish that of prejudice instead of a victim of love.

" 'Tis now for you, charming wives, for you, my dear friends, to set the example. I have put your husband's minds at rest, I have taught those gentlemen that, irrespective of what you do, they need not lose a wink of sleep on your account; I am ready now to instruct you in that art of adroitly deceiving them, but first I'm going to make you shudder before the dreadful picture of all the penalties reserved for adultery—I show you this picture in order that you see what enormous pleasures this alleged crime must afford if everyone is punished for it with such exceptional rigor.

"A law proclaimed by the Emperor Constantine prescribed for adultery the same punishment meted out for parricide, to wit: the culprit was burnt alive, either that or sewn in a sack and cast into the sea; those luckless women found guilty of the crime were deprived even of the right to appeal their case.

"A governor of a province had exiled a woman found guilty of adultery; Majorianus, deeming the punishment

too light, expelled the woman from Italy and decreed that, whoever were to slay her, had the Emperor's permission so to do.

"The ancient Danes punished the adultress with death, whilst, homicide meant the payment of a mere fine; that illustrates which of the two offenses they considered the graver.

"The Mongols cleave an adultress in two with a sword.

"In the Kingdom of Tonkin, she is trampled by an elephant.

"But in Siam, their ways are more lenient: she is otherwise delivered unto the elephant. A specially prepared contraption into which she is placed allows the elephant to enjoy her in the belief she is a female elephant. Lewdness may well have been behind the invention of this procedure.

"The Gauls used to smother her in mud and filth, then drag her body round in it awhile.

"In Juida, the husband himself condemned his wife: he had her executed immediately, there before his eyes if he found her guilty, all of which was a tradition of extreme convenience to husbands who were weary of their wives.

"In other countries, the law empowers the husband to execute his spouse with his own hand if he finds that she has wronged him. This custom was notably that of the Goths. Such is probably the best and wisest of all man-made laws; an unpublic, furtive crime ought to be punished unpublicly, furtively, and vengeance therefor ought to be tasted by him alone and in private whom the deed has outraged. 'Tis plain, all these laws owe their origin to nought but pride and lewdness.

"Enjoy yourself to the limit. The limit? Discovery. If discovered, yield on every score, refuse nothing.

"If you indulge in foursomes, let the other woman be your trusted friend: have a sharp eye out to discern what bonds, what commitments there are she must respect; don't enter the party if she does not have roughly the same duties and obligations as you to observe, for then she'll be less discreet than you, and her imprudences will be your undoing.

"However, respect your husband's life. I recommend that not because there is any individual on earth whose existence must be preserved if it clashes with our private interest; but because, in the present case, our personal interest consists in safeguarding that husband's days. 'Tis a long and tedious study for a wife, to come to know her husband; once the job's done, there's no need for her to have to begin anew with another; and it is not sure that the second will be any improvement upon the first. It's not a lover she wants in her husband, it's a complacent, understanding and understood creature; and success is better assured by long habit than by novelty.

"With a prudish or humble air, you'll never be suspected of anything; were someone to dare criticize your character, a thousand champions will spring to break lances in your defense; the public, lacking enough time to pursue its investigations very far, never judges save by appearances: it costs hardly anything at all to wear those it wants to see. Give it satisfaction and when you need it, the public will be on your side.

"O my companions, I say it unto you: blither and snivel the judges, let whine and gripe the hypocrites; they have their own reasons for condemning those delicious heats, those joyous frenzies which confer all their charm upon your days. Do not be intimidated by that empty epithet *whore,* an idiotic *slut* is she who declined the glory of that title. A whore is a lovable creature, young, voluptuous, who, less interested in her reputation than in the welfare of others, on those grounds alone merits every praise. The whore is the beloved child of Nature, the abstinent girl is Nature's execration; And what more potent insult can a girl fling in Nature's teeth, than to waste herself by keeping flagrantly, and in defiance of all the injury that may thereby result to her own self, an illusory virginity whose entire value derives from nothing but the most preposterous, the vilest, the meannest of all irrationalities?

"Is it not certain that every man has been infused with the idea of acquiring wealth? That being so, the means he employs to become rich are just as natural as they are lawful. Similarly, are not all men given to seeking the

greatest amount of delight in their pleasure-taking? Does not everyone sense a desire to preserve himself, has he not been blessed with that instinct?

"In the whole world is not the happiest being he in whom there beats a heart rock-hardened by passions . . . who has by passion been brought to there where he is immune to all save pleasure? And what need has he to be susceptible of any other sensation? Ah, my friends, were we advanced to that degree of turpitude, we'd no longer have the look of vileness, and we'd make gods of our errors rather than denigrate ourselves! 'Tis thus Nature points out to us all the gate to happiness: let us go that way."

"My best beloved, however shall you repair all the damage that's just been done?," questioned Juliette.

"That which you've sustained shall be very soon, my angel," Delbène made me answer; "tomorrow, I'll massage you with an ointment that so wonderfully restores their whole order to things that afterwards no one would ever guess they'd been exposed to rude usage. As for Laurette —have you forgotten that 'tis generally believed she fled the école? She's ours, Juliette. She'll not reappear in the world."

"What are you going to do with her?" I wondered, much mystified.

"Make her the victim of our lewdness. Dear Juliette! you are yet so very novice. Do you still not understand that the only serious ones are the criminal excesses? and that the more horror one enwraps pleasure in, the more charming pleasure becomes?"

"Truthfully, my dear, I can make nothing of this you say—"

"Have patience then. The facts will be more explicit. You shan't have long to wait. But now, let's have some supper."

The company removes to a little room adjacent to the salon where the orgies have been celebrated. Here, spread upon tables, is a profusion of dainties, the rarest delicacies in meat, wine of the very best. We take our places . . . Laurette serves us! I soon remarked, from the manner the group adopted with her, by the harsh tone in which she was addressed, that the poor little wretch

was already considered as nothing more than a victim whose doom was sealed. The merrier spirits grew, the worse she was treated; there was nothing our youthful waitress did that wasn't rewarded by a pinch or a tweak, a slap or a blow; and if she was remiss, however slightly inattentive to instructions, she was often more severely punished yet. I'll not linger, kind reader, over the doings and utterances which distinguished that lavish bacchanal; be content to know that, for horror, for foulness, they equalled the worst I've since seen by way of the utmost in libertinage.

Down there, the air was very warm, we women were nude; the men were in the same disorder and, mixed in amidst us, were with complete unrestraint giving themselves over to whatever their delirium could egg them into undertaking.

Extravagant Delbène, at a loss what to invent next to reawaken desires her libertinage has foundered in exhaustion, announces that she wants to go to the vault where the mortal remains of the women of the house repose, that she wants to find the coffin of one of those her jealous rage brought lately to destruction. The idea stirs the company; we get to our feet, we locate the spot, candles are set upon the coffins ranged round that of the young novice whom three months previously Delbène had poisoned, after having idolized her. We were all spectators. Delirious, Delbène was battening avidly upon these horrors when a dreadful shrill screech was heard, all the candles snuffing out that very instant.

"My God, what be this!" cried the intrepid Delbène, alone amongst us all to preserve her courage in the midst of tumult and affright. "Juliette! Flavie! Volmar!"

A wood owl hidden in those underground places was the cause of it all; startled by the light to which its eyes were unaccustomed, it had taken flight and its beating wings created a draught that had blown the candles out. When I recovered my wits I found myself in my bed and Delbène, who came to visit me directly she learned I was better, told me that after she'd calmed the two men, who'd been nearly as terrified as we, it was with their aid she had transported us to our cells.

"In supernatural occurrences I have no belief at all,"

Delbène asserted. "Never is there an effect without its cause and my first concern, whenever surprised by some effect, is to trace out its cause without delay."

"And Laurette, Madame?"

"Laurette? She's in the cellars, my sweet. We left her there—there—"

"What! Then you—"

"Not yet. It will be uppermost on our agenda the next time we assemble. She underwent yesterday's experience more successfully than one might have thought."

"Oh, indeed, Delbène, you're a very debauched thing . . . a cruel thing—"

"Now, now, not at all. It's simply that I've got very strong passions, and that I heed nothing else. And, persuaded as I am that they are the most faithful interpreters of Nature's will, I yield to whatever counsel they give me, and do so with as little fear as remorse or regret. But you look to be whole again, Juliette; get up, my darling, come dine with me in my apartment, we'll chat together."

Later, when we had finished our meal, Delbène asked me to settle myself in a chair beside her.

"You are surprised to find me so calm in the midst of crime? I noticed yesterday that you were struck, even startled, by my equanimity in the thick of the horrors we were committing and I seem to remember that you accused me of lacking pity for that poor Laurette our debauchery sacrificed.

"O Juliette, banish all doubt thereof: Nature has arranged everything, informed everything, hers is the responsibility for all you see and all there is. Has she given equal strength, equal beauty, equal grace to all the creatures wrought by her hand? Of course not. The luckless ones chance puts in our clutches, or who excite our passions, have their place in Nature's scheme as do the stars in the firmament and the sun that gives us light . . ."

"But," I interrupted, "were you hard of plight, Delbène, would you not yearn for succour and kindness?"

"I? I'd know how to suffer uncomplainingly," the stoical thinker gave me answer, "and I'd implore the aid of no one."

"Believe me, Juliette, oh yes, be firmly persuaded that

when I consent to let others suffer and when I refrain from interfering with their sufferings, it is because I myself have learned to suffer, to endure suffering, and alone."

"Arguments in that kind can lead far . . ."

"And one should keep in step with them," Delbène rejoined. "Take them as far as you like and I defy you to show me the point at which they become dangerous; one has enjoyed oneself the whole way along the journey, and that's all, one cannot ask for more."

We were at this stage in our conversation when a lackey, sent by my mother, arrived to inform Madame the Head-Mistress of the dreadful situation at our home and the grave illness of my father; my sister and I were requested to return at once.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Mme. Delbène, "but I've entirely forgotten your maidenhead, that needs repair. One instant, my angel, here, this jar contains an extract of myrtle, rub yourself with it in the morning and before retiring at night, nine days of that ought to suffice. On the tenth you'll find yourself as much a virgin as you were emerging from the womb of your mother."

Then, sending someone in search of Justine, she entrusted us both to the servant who'd come to fetch us away, and she besought us to return as soon as ever we could. We embraced her, and left.

My father died. You know what disasters ensued upon his passing: my mother's death, a month later, and the destitution and state of abandon we found ourselves in. Justine, who knew nothing of my secret liaisons with the Head-Mistress, knew nothing either of the visit I paid her several days after our ruin, and as the behavior and sentiments she then exhibited reveal what remained to be discovered of this original woman's character, it were well, my friends, that I recount that interview. Delbène was short with me that day. She began by refusing to open the gate to me, and only consented to talk for a moment through the grillwork dividing us.

When, surprised by this chilly reception, I reminded her of our carnal attachments, she said:

"My child, all that grubby nonsense is over and done with directly two persons cease to dwell together; so my

advice to you is to forget it. For my part, I must assure you that I cannot recall a single one of the facts and circumstances you allude to. Recollect the fate of Euphrosiné: she didn't even wait to be beckoned by necessity, but of her free will leapt into a career of libertinage. Since now you have no choice, imitate her. There's nothing else for you to do, once you've made the choice, refrain from calling upon me: the role you are destined to, may, after all, not suit you, may not bring you success, you might need money, credit, and I shall not be able to supply you the one or the other."

So saying, Delbène turned on her heel and walked away, leaving me in a state of bewilderment . . . a state which, of course, would have been less distressing had I been more philosophical; my meditations were cruel. . . .

I left immediately, firmly resolved to follow the wicked creature's advice, perilous though it was. Luckily, I remembered the name and address of the woman Euphrosiné, alas! I never dreamt I would someday have to avail myself of her: an hour later I stood at her door.

Mme. Duvergier gave me a heart-warming welcome. Her connoisseur's eye deceived by the wonder Delbène's most excellent remedy had wrought.

After the reverses I had sustained, my existence depended solely upon my new hostess, I confided myself entirely into her hands and accepted the conditions she imposed; but no sooner was I alone and given opportunity to ponder events than I began to dwell anew upon my abandonment and upon Mme. Delbène's ingratitude. Alas! said I to myself, why did her heart harden before my misfortune? Juliette poor, Juliette rich—are these two different creatures? What then is this curious capriciousness that leads one to love opulence and fly from misery? But, I went on to wonder, how can it be that this libertine woman—this criminal, how is it that she does not fear the indiscretion of those whom she treats so cavalierly?—further childishness on my part; I as yet knew nothing of the insolence and the effrontery that characterize vice when seated upon foundations of wealth and reputation.

So then! said I to myself, I have but to strive after wealth too; rich, I'll soon be as impudent as that woman,

I'll enjoy the same rights and the same pleasures. Let's beware of virtuousness, 'tis sure disaster; for vice is victorious always and everywhere; poverty's to be avoided at all costs, since it's the object of an universal scorn. . . . But, having nothing, how am I to elude misfortune? By criminal deeds, obviously. Crime? What's that to me? Madame Delbène's teachings have already rotted my heart and infected my brain; I am convinced that crime as nicely serves Nature's ends as can goodness and decency; so let's be off into this perverse world where success is the one mark of triumph; let no obstacle check us, no scruple hinder us, miserable only is he who tarries by the wayside.

Fortified by these reflexions—which may perhaps strike you as somewhat precocious at the age of fifteen, but which, granted the education I had had, will surely not seem unlikely to you—I set myself to waiting resignedly for whatever Providence might bring me, fully determined to exploit every opportunity to better my fortune at no matter what price to myself or to others.

Mme. Duvergier had but six women aboard; but these were seconded by reinforcements numbering three hundred, all at her beck and call; two strapping lackeys five feet and eight inches tall, membered each like Hercules, and two little grooms of fourteen and fifteen, heavenly to see, were likewise furnished to libertines who wanted to mix a bi-sexual batter or who preferred anti-physical antics to the enjoyment of women; and in cases where those limited masculine effectives would not have sufficed, Duvergier could increase them by drawing upon a reserve corps of over eighty individuals who were domiciled outside the house, all of them ready, at any hour, to present themselves anywhere their services were required.

Madame Duvergier's house was cunning, it was delightful. Situated betwixt courtyard and garden, and having two exits, one on either side, rendezvous took place there under conditions of secrecy which no other arrangements could have afforded; within, the furnishings were magnificent, the boudoirs voluptuous, lavishly decorated; the cook in the establishment was a master in his art, the wines were of quality, and the girls were

charming. The use of these outstanding facilities was not to be had for nothing. And, indeed, nothing in Paris cost anything like what one paid for an evening's rout in these divine surroundings; Duvergier never asked less than ten *louis* for the simplest kind of get-together. Without morals and without religion, enjoying the wholehearted and unfailing support of the police, panderess to the greatest lords of the realm, Mme. Duvergier, having nothing and no one under the sun to fear, created new fashions, made new discoveries, specialized in things which none of her calling had ever attempted anywhere, things which would make tremble both Nature and mankind.

For six weeks in a row, that adroit rascal sold me to above fifty buyers and, every evening, employing a pommade in many respects similar to Mme. Delbène's, she scrupulously mended the havoc wrought pitilessly all day long by the intemperance of those to whom her greed delivered me up. As those devirginizers without exception had a heavy hand and usually a beef's wit to match a beef's pizzle, I'll spare you a good many tedious particulars, pausing only to give you an account of the Duc de Stern, whose manic eccentricity I consider downright unusual.

I went to him got up as a little ha'penny slut. After traversing numerous sumptuous apartments I reached a mirrored room where the Duc was waiting for me, his manservant at his side, a tall young man of eighteen he was, handsome as they come and with the most interesting face. Thoroughly coached in the role I was expected to play, I was taken aback by none of the questions the lewd dog posed me. I stood before him; he was seated on a sofa. The Duc spoke to me in this wise:

"Is it true," he demanded, "that you are in the most direly necessitous circumstances, and that in coming here your sole purpose and one hope is to earn means indispensable simply to keep body and soul together?"

"Aye, Sire, and the truth is that for three days neither I nor my mother have tasted bread."

"Ho! Excellent then!" said the Duc. "The thing is of importance, I'm hugely pleased that matters stand thus with you. And 'tis your mother who sells you?"

"Yes, alas!"

"Splendid! Eh . . . and have you any sisters?"

"One, my Lord."

"And how is it she's not been sent to me?"

"Sire, she has left home, misery made her flee. We don't know what has become of her."

"She's got to be found, that! Where d'ye suppose she could be? What's her age?"

"Thirteen."

"Thirteen! Appalling, appalling—knowing my tastes as they must by now, why do they keep this creature back from me? Thirteen! Appalling. Well, I'll locate her, I'll find her somehow. Lubin, hey there, off with her clothes."

As soon as I am naked, Lubin examines me with extremest diligence and then declares to his master that everything is in the very best condition.

"Show me the other side," the Duc says.

And Lubin, whether or not convinced himself of the inexecution of any previous assault, is, in view of the admirable repair I'm in, able to assure the Duc that no evidence warrants the assumption that anything grave has befallen me hitherto.

" 'Tis well," says the lecherous nobleman, taking me in his arms and sitting me upon one of his thighs; "but you see, my child, don't you, that I'm incapable of doing the job myself? If you were Venus herself you'd not manage with me."

I sought to break away, to dodge, to protect myself; but the Duc de Stern would have none of it.

"Come, come, no shilly-shallying there, what I like is compliance in little girls, they who lack it in their conduct with me don't remain long in my good graces . . . Come nearer . . . Before anything else I'd like to have you kiss Lubin's"

I obey.

I was about to collapse beneath the sheer weight of their co-ordinated attacks when Lubin saved the day for me.

And this event having disordered the plan of the Duc's attacks, furious at having been displaced, seemed

only to be looking for an altar whereupon to vent its sordid rage.

Everything the bawd desires is promptly done; the operation terminates, and the whimsical libertine pays thirty *louis* for the hire.

Back in the house, Fatima, one of my companions I was fondest of, sixteen years old and lovely as the day, laughed merrily when I related my adventure. She had had the same one but, more fortunate than I, had profited from it to the tune of the fifty *louis* that had been in the purse she'd stolen from off the mantel.

"What?" I said, "you permit yourself such things?"

"Regularly or, rather, every chance I get, my dear," was Fatima's reply, "and altogether without hesitation or scruple, believe me. Those rascals are rich."

"I definitely think it is very wrong."

"Why, that's an odd notion, it is," Fatima assured me, "and a very misplaced one, considering who you are. It shan't take me long to disabuse you. Tomorrow I dine with my lover in the country, I'll ask Madame Duvergier's leave to include you in the party and you'll hear Dorval's reasoned arguments on the subject."

"Bitch!" I exclaimed. "You're going to corrupt what little in me is not yet attainted—oh, as things now are I am only too well disposed towards all those horrors. . . . Very well, 'tis agreed. Never fear, either, you'll have an excellent pupil in me. But will Duvergier let me go?"

"Nor have you anything to fear," quoth Fatima. "Leave it all to me."

Early the next morning there comes a carriage to fetch us, we drive to La Villette. The house we enter is secluded, but its appearance is not unseemly. A valet greets us and, having shown us into a very well furnished apartment, he retires and dismisses our carriage; 'twas then Fatima began to make things clear.

"Do you know where we are?" she asked, smiling.

"I have no idea."

"In the house of an exceedingly unusual man," my companion affirmed. "I lied when I told you that he's my lover; I've been here often—but on business. Of it, and of what I earn, Duvergier knows nothing; my pay is

thus my own. But the work is not without its unsure elements—"

"What do you mean?" I demanded. "You've aroused my . . . curiosity."

"This," said Fatima, "is the house of one of the most accomplished thieves in all Paris; the gentleman steals for his living—and from stealing derives his keenest pleasures. He'll explain it all to you, he'll outline his philosophy for your benefit—he'll even convert you to practicing what he preaches. Completely indifferent to women before he's done his day's work, it's only after he's robbed that he comes alive, only then are his lusts aroused hotly; and as he would have the image of his favorite passion reflected in everything that accompanies it, it is only when once we've stolen that he'll accept our favors—and, furthermore, he'll try to steal them from us; it's a subtle game, you'll understand it perfectly, however. It will seem as if we've gained nothing for our trouble . . . mind you, I've already been paid for this in advance. Here's the proof: ten *louis*. They're for you. I've kept an equivalent sum for myself."

"And Duvergier?"

"But I told you: she's not in the game. I swindle our beloved mother—am I so wrong to do so?"

"No, I dare say you're not," I agreed. "Whatever we earn here belongs to us, none of that damnable dividing the income which, God knows, drives me to distraction. But go on, at least explain the thing to me. Who are we going to rob, and how?"

"Listen," my companion said. "Spies, and he has a swarm of them posted everywhere throughout Paris, informs him of the arrival of foreigners and simpletons who land by the hundred in the city; he makes their acquaintance, he gives them dinners with women of our category who filch their purses while satisfying their needs; all the loot is turned over to him and, whatever be the nature of the article stolen, the women obtain a fourth part of its value, this being in addition to anything they have been paid by the clients."

"But," said I, "are there not risks entailed? How is it the fellow hasn't been arrested?"

"He would have been ages ago had he not taken measures to prevent any such inconvenience. Be sure of it, no danger threatens him."

"And his house?"

"Houses, rather. He has thirty of them. We're in this one today; he sets foot in it once every six months, perhaps only once a year. Act your part intelligently; two or three foreigners are to come to dinner; after the meal's over, we'll entertain these gentlemen in separate chambers. Be nimble, get the purse of yours, I promise you that with mine I'll not miss the mark. Hidden, Dorval will be watching us. The trick done, the dupes will be put to sleep by a potion slipped into their drink; we'll spend the remainder of the evening with the master of the house who, shortly after we've left, will leave also, go somewhere else and repeat the same infamies with other women. And our precious idiots, when tomorrow they wake up, they'll be only too happy to have got away with whole skins."

"Since we've been paid in advance," I asked Fatima, "why need we go through with the bargain?"

"It would be a miscalculation not to: he'd be finished with us; whereas, if we serve him well, he's likely to have us in twelve or fifteen times a year. And, wouldn't we deprive ourselves of all we may earn from robbing these cretins?"

Scarcely had we ended our discussion than Dorval entered. He was a man of forty years, his face was extremely fair to look upon, his air and demeanor gave me the impression of a clever and amiable person; above all, he was endowed with the gift of seductiveness, of such great importance in a profession like his.

"Fatima," speaking to my companion, casting an engaging smile at me, "I suppose you've instructed this pretty young thing in the nature of our joint undertaking? Then I have but to tell you that we're going soon to receive two elderly Germans, our guests for tonight. They've been a month in Paris and are burning to meet some attractive girls. One of the two has on him diamonds worth some twenty thousand *écus;* Fatima, I recommend him to you. The other seems to wish to buy a property in this village. I've assured him I can pro-

cure him a fine one at a very low price provided he's willing to pay cash; he ought therefore to have over forty thousand francs in his pocket, whether in specie or in letters of credit; Juliette, I leave him to you. Show an aptitude for the task and I'll seek your collaboration in future, and often."

"What! For shame, Sir," I said, "can such horrors arouse you sensually?"

"Charming girl," replied Dorval, "I see that you know nothing of this matter. You require enlightenment. We'll supply it in due time, until then we've other things to occupy us. Let's pass into this room, our Germans are about to appear, kindly remember to employ all your skill at seducing them, at . . . undertaking them; that's all I ask of you, upon that everything shall depend."

We entered. Scheffner, the swain who was to be mine, was an authentic baron of forty-five, authentically ugly, authentically bepimpled, and authentically stupid as, insofar as I can determine, every authentic German is if one excepts the notorious Gessner. The goose my friend was to pluck was called Conrad; he was indeed covered with diamonds; his mind, his figure, his face and his age rendered him almost identical to his compatriot, and his sheer witlessness, as imposing as Sheffner's, guaranteed Fatima a success no less easy nor any less complete than, by every indication, mine was to be.

The conversation, general at the outset, and dull enough, swiftly became very particular. Fatima was not only pretty, she was amusing; she soon had poor Conrad befuddled and spellbound; whilst my air of shy innocence soon brought Conrad squarely under my thumb. Dinner came on. Dorval saw to it that his guests' glasses were filled and often replenished with the most delicious wines, and we were scarcely midway through dessert when both our Teutonic friends were giving plain evidence of an extreme desire to converse with us in private.

Dorval, wishing to oversee each of these operations, therefore did not wish them to transpire simultaneously; declaring that there was but one boudoir, as best he could he calmed Conrad, chafing dreadfully at the bit, and had me lead Scheffner away and into action. His enthusiasm was unbounded, that good German had an

insatiable desire for caresses. It was warm in the boudoir, I invited him to remove his clothes, I removed mine in order to inflame him further; and placing his discarded garments within reach of my right hand, I amorously hugged his head to my breast, concentrating rather more upon my own interests than upon his pleasures, I expertly rifled all his pockets, one after another. A thin little purse seeming to contain all the money he had upon his person, I concluded that the treasure was cached in his billfold and, adroitly snatching it out of the right-hand pocket of his coat, I slipped it under the mattress of the bed we were toiling on.

Having attended to the crucial part of the affair and finding the rest little to my taste, being under no further obligation to pamper the great stinking lout wallowing on top of me, I ring, a woman appears, helps the German dignitary readjust himself, gives him a properly dosed glass of liqueur, he quaffs it off, she guides him to a bedchamber where he falls straight into a profound sleep that had him still snoring eight hours later.

A moment after he's gone and it's Dorval who enters.

"You are a wonder, my angel," he cries, embracing me, "a wonder, a delight! I missed not a thing. Oh, you maneuvered him artfully! And, believe me, I appreciate such performances."

And leaping onto the bed with me, I discovered that this libertine's idiosyncrasy was, with his mouth.

I turned the purse and the billfold over to him; he took them both, didn't pause to examine either, and I ceded my place to Fatima. Dorval led me away with him and while, peering through a spy-hole, he observed the technique my companion was employing to achieve the same object. He looked to be in seventh heaven. Marvelous effects wrought by the conjuncture of crime and lust, oh, the energy they impart to the passions' delirium!

A vigorous man, Dorval returns to my companion. I clap my eye to the spy-hole, I see every last detail: as he did with me.

"Kind friends," afterwards Dorval apologized, "by a single feature, brute strength, were men distinguished and individually differentiated when, long ago, society was in its infancy. Nature gave them all space wherein to

dwell, and it was upon this physical force that was to depend the manner in which they were to share the world between them.

"Theft, instituted by Nature, was not at all banished from the face of the earth; but it came to exist in other forms: the magistrates stole by having themselves feed for doing the justice they ought to render free of charge. The merchant stole by selling his sack of potatoes at a price one-third above the intrinsic value a sack of potatoes really has. Sovereigns stole by imposing arbitrary tithes, dues, taxes, levies upon their subjects. All these plunderings were permitted, they were all authorized in the precious name of right, and where are we today?

"And now let each of them pause a moment and inspect his own heart. In deciding to assault the strong, the weak individual, whatever may be the rights justifying his decision, will be subject to mild doubts and waverings; and this hesitation to proceed and gain satisfaction, comes, from the fact, he is just about to overstep the laws of Nature by assuming a character which is not native to him. The strong individual, on the contrary, when he despoils the weak, enters actively into the enjoyment of the rights Nature has conferred upon him, by exercising them to the full, reaps pleasure in proportion to the greater or lesser extent he gives to the realization of his potentialities.

"Nothing is more readily conceivable than theft as debauch: it occasions the indispensable shock upon the nervous system and thence is born the inflammation which determines the erotic mood. Everybody like me is acquainted with this secret pleasure; one may also experience it by cheating at the gaming table, or while playing games of any other sort.

"But who are greater thieves than our financiers?"

"Well," was my reply to Dorval, "I am not unimpressed by your catalogue, I savour your arguments, but I do declare I am far from being able to understand how someone as rich as for example you yourself can derive pleasure from stealing."

"Because, when performed, the act has a potent impact upon the nervous structure, I've told you so, and this impact, is extremely voluptuous in my case, rich

though I happen to be; rich or not, I am constructed like any other man. I may add, that, in my view, I possess no more than is necessary to me, and having what is necessary doesn't make one rich."

The night was advancing, Dorval had further need of us, there were further lubrical episodes he wanted to expose us to, the enterprises he had in mind called for rest, silence, and calm.

"Throw those Germans into a carriage, will you," said he to one of his hirelings, a man who was accustomed to doing what was needed under these circumstances, "get them out of here, they'll not wake up. Strip them and dump them naked in some out of the way street. God takes care of his little children."

"Sir!" I cried, "what wanton cruelty!"

"Do you think so? Never mind. They've satisfied me, I never for one instant wanted more than that from them; can you tell me what use I have of them now? So we'll deliver them into the safe-keeping of Providence, that's what Providence is there for, after all."

"But it is you who expose them to disaster—"

"I? I only co-operate with Nature: I carry things to a certain stage, there I stop, her strong arm does the rest. Let them go. Fortunate they may count themselves that I do not do still worse; perhaps, indeed, I ought to . . ."

Dorval's command was executed without delay; transported to the carriage, the two Germans, dead asleep, were removed.

Once the Germans had been carted off, Dorval gave us exactly one-quarter of what we had taken from them; then he left the room. Fatima warned me that yet another redoubtable scence of lechery lay ahead; she couldn't predict just what the drama would consist in, but she was sure nothing grave would happen to us. Scarcely had she finished whispering those words than a woman appeared in the doorway and summoned us to follow her; we did as we were told; after mounting some flights of stairs and walking down some corridors in the uppermost part of the house, she pushed us into a dark room where, until Dorval arrived, we could make out nothing of our surroundings.

It was shortly later Dorval came in. He was accompanied by two big rascals, mustached, of extremely sinister mien; they were bearing candles, their light revealed the strange furniture in this room. It was as I heard the door being bolted that my gaze fell upon the scaffold at the far end of the room. There stood two gibbets; deployed about was all the equipment needed for execution by the rope.

Dorval spoke in a brusque tone: "Mesdamoiselles, you are going to receive punishment for your crimes. You will undergo it here." Thereupon, settling himself in a large armchair, he bids his acolytes remove every stitch of clothing from our bodies—"Yes, stockings, shoes, everything." Our garments are laid in a heap at his feet. He rummages through them, takes all the money he finds in our pockets; then, rolling everything into a bundle, he tosses it out the window.

His face is impassive, his voice phlegmatic. As though to himself, but his eyes fixed upon us, he murmurs: "Useless, that stuff. A shroud for each of them. And I've got the two coffins ready."

From beneath the scaffold one of Dorval's agents does indeed drag out two coffins. He arranges them side by side.

"Duly aware as both of you are," Dorval then said, "of having earlier this same day, and in this same locality which is my house, *wickedly* robbed two good people of their gems and of their gold, I am nonetheless under obligation to represent that truth to you and to enquire of you: Are you or are you not guilty of this fell deed?"

"We are guilty, my Lord," Fatima replied.

I however was speechless. So terrifying were these proceedings that I was beginning to lose my wits.

"Since you avow your crime," Dorval resumed, "further formalities would be to no purpose; be that as it may, I must have a full confession. Is it not so, Juliette," the traitor continued, addressing me and thus forcing me to speak, "is it not true that you are responsible for their death, in the course of the night did you not, *inhumanly,* have them cast naked into the street?"

"Sir!" I stammered, "you yourself—"

Then, checking myself, I said:

"Yes. We are guilty of that crime too."

"Well then, I have but to pronounce sentence. You will both hear it upon your knees. Kneel, I say. Now approach."

We knelt, we approached. 'Twas then I spied the effect this horrible scene was producing upon that libertine.

"You're going to be hanged . . . you're going to be choked absolutely to death, the two of you! The whores Rose Fatima and Claudine Juliette are condemned to die for having *villainously, odiously* robbed and despoiled and then exposed, with clear intent to destroy, two individuals who were guests in the home of Monsieur Dorval: justice in consequence requires that the sentence be executed immediately."

We stood up and, at a signal from one of his myrmidons, first I, then Fatima advanced up to him. He was in a lather, he swore and stormed: his hands roved distractedly over every part of our bodies and with curses and threats he mixed jibes.

"How cruel I am," said he, "to consign such lovely flesh to the dungheap. But there's no hope of reprieve, the sentence has been pronounced, it's got to be carried out . . ."

Then his two lieutenants laid hands on Fatima. The poor girl was bound in a trice, the halter was slipped round her neck, but everything was so arranged that the victim, after hanging the briefest instant in the air, would fall to the floor where a mattress was spread. Then came my turn; I tremble, fear blinds me—of what they'd done to Fatima I'd seen only enough to be terrified, the rest has escaped me and it was only after my own experience that I realized how little risk had been involved in this curious ritual. And so, when the two men came for me, overcome with fear, I cast myself at Dorval's feet: my resistance aroused him: he bit my flank with such violence the marks his teeth left were still there two months later. They dragged me away and several seconds afterwards I was lying motionless beside Fatima. Dorval comes over to where we are, peers at us.

"Do you mean to say the bitches are still alive?"

"Begging your pardon, Sir," one of his men informs him, "'tis done, they breathe no more."

And it is at this point Dorval's dark passion reaches its climax: he leaps upon Fatima—who takes care not to stir a muscle—and I too am lying still as death—; swearing like one of the damned.

Was he ashamed? or was he disgusted? Which ever, we saw no more of Dorval. As for the valets, they'd vanished the moment their master had bounded upon the scaffold to belabor us in his frenzy. The same woman who had introduced us into this attic chamber now reappeared, released us, she brought us refreshments, assured us our ordeal was over but also advised us that nothing of what had been taken away from us would be given back.

"My instructions are to restore you naked to where you came from," she continued. "You'll do whatever complaining you wish to Madame Duvergier, she'll look into the matter as she sees fit. So let's be off, 'tis late, you must be home before dawn."

Angry, I ask to speak to Dorval, I am told I cannot —although the odd fellow as in all likelihood surveying us through one of his peepholes. The woman repeats that we must make haste; a carriage is there awaiting us, we climb in, and a little more than an hour later we enter our matron's house.

Mme. Duvergier was still in bed. Retiring to our rooms, there we each found ten *louis* and a complete new costume, in quality far superior to those we'd lost.

"We'll not say anything. Agreed? For we've been paid, our clothing has been better than replaced," Fatima pointed out, "and there would be no advantage to having Duvergier know about our outing. I told you, Juliette, these things go on behind her back and they'd best stay there. When we're not obliged to share our earnings with her, there's no need to mention our employment," Fatima gazed at me for a moment. "My dear," she went on, "you've just paid a very cheap price for a very great lesson; be easy, the bargain you've struck was good."

Several days later I had an interview with Mme. Duvergier. After inspecting me, she said:

"Tomorrow morning, dear heart, your masculine maidenhead goes to the venerable Governor of Lyon who pays me fifty *louis* apiece for these articles. Look sharp, see to it you oppose no resistance to the good prelate's enervated desires, they'll faint entirely away at the first hint of skittishness on your part."

Fifteen or sixteen others, of similar tastes but in good physical health, passed through my hands and over my body in the course of a month which I remember as one distinguished by some rather unusual episodes; and then came the day when I was dispatched to the home of our own Noirceuil who's just left us for a few days. He'll be back by the time I've completed my narrative; not that he would be disinclined to listen to such adventures. But he already knows mine by heart.

Through an incredible excess of debauchery altogether worthy of the engaging individual you all know and with whom I shall perhaps be able to make one or two of you a little better acquainted, Noirceuil liked to have his wife be witness to his libertinage, to have her collaborate in it, and then to subject her to it. I should remark that Noirceuil, when we first met, thought I was a maid, and that he wished to deal only with girls who were virginal.

Mme. de Noirceuil was a very gracious and gentle woman and she could not have been beyond twenty years old. Given at a very tender age to her husband, he a man of about forty and of a libertinage which simply knew no limits, I leave you to suppose for yourselves what this appealing creature must have had to put up with since the first day she became the slave of that roué. Husband and wife were in the boudoir when I entered; a moment after my arrival, Noirceuil rang, and two lads of seventeen and eighteen came in by another door. They were nearly naked.

"My dear, I have been given to understand that you possess the world's most splendid body," Noirceuil said to me once the company was assembled. "Madame," he continued, addressing his wife, "do please have the kindness to unveil this marvel."

"Oh indeed, Monsieur de Noirceuil," replied that poor

little woman, all confused and ashamed, "the things you demand of me—"

"They are of an eminent simplicity, Madame; it's strange, one would suppose you'd have become accustomed to them, since you've been performing them for quite some time now. Your attitude mystifies me. Does not a wife have her duties? and do I not allow you the amplest opportunities to fulfill them? Passing strange, so I think, that as yet you have not taken a rational approach to the matter."

"Oh, I never shall!"

"So much the worse for you; Will you, Madame, promptly attend to mine: unclothe this child."

Out of sympathy for the poor woman, to spare her needless affliction I was about to take off my clothes myself when Noirceuil, interceding, bade me stop and, raising a threatening hand to his wife, left her no choice but to obey. While his wife proceeded with her task, Noirceuil, the object of his two comrades' affectionate by-play, used both hands to excite them. Directly I am naked, Noirceuil has his wife steer me towards him, he has the two lads stripped—stripped by Mme. de Noirceuil who, once she has collected and folded the clothing lying on the floor, takes off her own. Noirceuil, naked also, thus finds himself in the center of a group comprised of two attractive women and a pair of pretty boys.

"Excellent," says he contentedly once the whole complex operation is under way, "what more could I ask?"

"Oh, Sir!" groans the libertine's conscience-stricken lady, "do you then derive it from my despair?"

"I do, Madame, and in significant measure. You know me to be frank in these matters and so you will believe me when I affirm that my enjoyment would be far less were you any more willing to comply with it."

"Is there then some divine necessity that requires you forever to repeat this execrable—"

"A divine necessity, Madame, precisely. My happiness decrees it."

And the tempo of these infamies increased apace; Noirceuil promised two *louis* to whomever of us three

most successfully teased the victim: the rules of the game admitted blows of the fist, kicks, bites, slaps, pinches, indeed, there were hardly any rules at all. There's no imagining the tricks those lads and I invented; we only left off our practical jokes when Mme. de Noirceuil lost consciousness.

My looks and my evil little aptitudes had taken Noirceuil's fancy, he invited me to stay to supper with his two young playmates. We ate in charming surroundings; the table was served only by Mme. de Noirceuil, all unclad, whom her husband promised a scene that would outdo the recent one, if she failed to perform suitably her menial chores.

Noirceuil, of course, is a wit. You'll agree that where it comes to constructing rational bases to one's irrational extravagances, the man has few peers. I'd thought to hazard some reproaches for his comportment towards his wife: "Truly," said I, "'tis rare, the injustice you subject that poor creature to—"

"Rare? Why, I'm not so sure. But as for the injustice, you're quite right," he replied, "what she has to put up with is dreadfully unjust—but only from her point of view. From mine, I assure you, nothing could be juster, the proof thereof is that nothing so delights me as what I wreak upon her."

"But," I enquired of the black-hearted libertine, "when the delirium in you has abated, do you not sense some subtle, some obscure virtuous impulses—which, were you to obey them would without fail incline you in the direction of good?"

"Yes," Noirceuil admitted, "I do occasionally sense impulses of that sort. The storm of passion rages, then subsides, and in the ensuing calm they are sometimes engendered, and 'tis a strange thing. It is not virtue which is struggling to make itself heard in me, but this faint voice that now and then pipes up for a brief interval is no other than that of education and prejudice.

"And so I say unto you that all is vice in man; vice alone is therefore the essence of his nature and of his constitution."

During this learned dissertation, Mme. de Noirceuil and the two Ganymedes had fallen asleep.

Noirceuil glanced their way. "Feeble-minded creatures," he murmured; "pleasure-machines, sufficient to our purposes, but, truly, their appalling insensibility depresses me." His eyes now rested meditatively upon me. "You, Juliette, your subtler mind conceives me, understands me, yes, anticipates me, I relish your company. And," he added, further narrowing his eyes, "you cannot hide it: you are in love with evil."

I trembled. "I am, Monsieur, I am, very much so. It —it dazzles me, it—"

"You will go far, my child. I am fond of you. I should like to see more of you."

"Your sentiments flatter me, Monsieur, I might even venture to say that I merit them, so straitly do mine conform to yours. . . . I have had some education, 'twas at a private school my mind was trained by a friend. Alas, Sir, my birth is not mean, it ought to have guaranteed me against the humiliation wherein now I am by hard circumstance."

And thereupon I recounted my history to Noirceuil.

"Juliette," said he after having heard me out, listening to every detail with keen attention, "I am sorely distressed by all this you tell me."

"Why so?"

"Why? Because I knew your father. I am the cause of his bankruptcy, 'twas I ruined him. There was a moment when I was in control of his entire fortune, I had the choice of doubling it for him or dispossessing him utterly; having consulted my principles, I found I had, indeed, no choice at all but to prefer my welfare to his. He died a pauper, and I have an income of three hundred thousand pounds a year. After all you have said, I ought of course to make you reparation, since if you have suffered adversity 'tis owing to my crimes; but such a gesture would be virtuous. D'ye see, I have a very great horror of virtue, I could never indulge in such a thing. I fear that past events have raised impenetrable barriers between us two; I regret it, but it looks as though our acquaintance were come to its term."

"Hideous man!" I cried, "however much I am the victim of your vices, I adore them . . . yes, I adore your principles—"

"O Juliette, there is more to be told," he said in a quiet tone.

"I want to hear everything."

"Your father . . . your mother—"

"Yes?"

"Their existence was a nuisance to me. To avoid betrayal, I had to sacrifice them. They went in swift succession to the grave? That could be ascribed to a poison . . . they once dined at my home—"

A sudden quaking laid hold of me, to the core of me I shuddered; but straightway upon Noirceuil I bent a stare, the apathetic stare of the wickedness with which, in spite of me, Nature was at once burning and freezing my heart:

"Monster," I repeated in a thickened voice, and speaking slowly, "thou are an abomination, I love thee."

"The murder of your parents?"

"Can that matter to me? Sensations are my means for judging everything; none were stimulated in me by those persons of whom your crimes have ridded me forever, and to hear you confess what you have done, sets me all afire, transports me . . . ah, I may become delirious—"

"Charming creature," said Noirceuil, "your naïveté, the candid purity of your soul, everything about you conspires against my principles; I am going to violate them and keep you by me, Juliette, I'll not part with you. You shall not return to Duvergier, I'll not hear of it."

"But, Monsieur—your lady?"

"She'll be no better than your slave, you'll reign over my household, everyone in it will be under your orders, you shall have but to give them and be obeyed. Crime does indeed hold a mighty sway over my soul, whatever, whoever bears the evil brand is dear unto me; Nature made me to love it; abhorring virtue, despite myself I fall ever and ever down to my knees before crime and infamy. Oh Juliette . . . Juliette, come hither."

I approached him, bidding him have furiously at me.

Directly I was installed in his town house Noirceuil expressed his reluctance to have me venture out of it,

and would not even consent to let me go recover the effects I'd left at Duvergier's; on the morrow he presented me to his domestics, to his acquaintances, saying I was a cousin, and from then on I was entrusted with the direction of the house.

However, I could not resist seizing the first occasion to pay a quick visit to my former employer; indeed, I had no intention of cutting myself off altogether from her, but neither did I think it prudent policy to seem too eager to see her. I waited a short while, then, dressed in all my finery, I arrived at her door.

"Juliette," cried Duvergier, "you have chosen a good moment to visit me, and I shall employ the occasion to convince you; waiting in the next room I've some fifteen women whom I'm going to pack off to be laid somewhere outside town; look closely at them, each has her story. But if I am committing a grave imprudence in talking about them and in allowing them to be seen, I do it for your sake, and would not for someone else's."

So saying, Duvergier slid aside a little secret panel which exposed the entire room to our view without ourselves being visible to those within it.

"Did I say there were fifteen ladies in the circle? Count them for yourself."

Fifteen women, all charming to behold but differently dressed, were indeed waiting, in silence, for the instructions they were to receive.

"We'll move round from right to left," said Duvergier, "beginning with that superb blonde you see there by the fireplace. She is the Duchesse de Saint-Fal, whose conduct is surely not to be blamed; for, lovely as you must admit she is, my lord the Duc cannot bear her. Although you see her here, she is none the less rumored to be of spotless virtue; her family is very jealous of its name, watches her closely and, were news of her activities to leak abroad, they'd have her confined."

"But," I remarked, "these women must all run a grave risk by showing their presence here to each other. Might they not meet elsewhere? A slip of the tongue—or a little malice—"

"Firstly," said the matron, "they are not mutually acquainted; but if later they should so become, what

could one tell of another that she could not instantly turn against her accuser? I've been servicing these persons or their like for five and twenty years, and I've yet to hear tell of a single betrayal; they themselves fear no such thing. Do they look uneasy? Let me continue.

"That tall woman next to the Duchesse, she who appears to be about twenty and whose heavenly countenance resembles that of the purest virgin, she is wild about her husband; notwithstanding, she has an equally wild temperament; she pays me to put her in touch with youths. Would you believe it? she's such a libertine, even at her age, that despite the money I am willing to spend, I simply cannot locate men big enough to satisfy her.

"That other girl is a little bourgeoise I've suborned. She's to marry, she adores her intended; but she's had a schooling rather like your own. Yesterday, Noirceuil and I concluded negotiations for the sale of her virginity. A young politician should soon arrive, he's contracted to loosen her up a little.

"Glance closely at that other woman, that one there. I believe she is twenty-six. She lives with a man whom she is beyond words devoted to, who denies her nothing her heart desires; they've both done incredible things for one another; but that doesn't prevent the little rascal from every man in sight, it's men she loves, all men, and with a rapacity that takes one's breath away. Formerly, her lover permitted her to indulge herself, if anyone's to blame for the disorders she wallows in, 'tis he: she but profits from the examples he once set before her, and unbeknownst to him she has her daily fling of under my roof.

"The pretty brunette beside her is the wife of an elderly individual who wedded her for love; she exhibits prodigious consideration for him, and there are few who can boast of so wonderful a reputation for virtue. 'Tis here her patience is rewarded: she's waiting for a pair of young men; later on in the day she'll come back again to meet the man she loves. Of mornings she dedicates herself to debauchery; the longings of her heart are satisfied after lunch.

"Now we come to that middle-class girl over there, she's nineteen, and tell me if you've ever seen a more comely creature. Her lover has done everything under the sun for her: he rescued her from poverty, settled her debts, maintains her on the finest footing; if she took a fancy to the very stars, he'd attempt to steal them out of heaven for her. But libertinage is not what guides her, no; rather, 'tis greed: she does whatever is asked of her, she'll consent to any match I make so long as she's paid for her trouble, and her price is high. Is she wrong to ask all the market will stand? The brute I'm going to turn her over to will leave her bedridden for six weeks, and she knows it; but she'll earn her ten thousand francs this morning, and for the rest she doesn't care a fig."

"And her lover?"

"Oh, she'll improvise some excuse or other, never fear. She slipped and fell. Or she was run down by a carriage."

"That little enchantress there," Duvergier continued, pointing out a gorgeous creature, "is a more unusual case: her mother sells her, they are needy folk. The two of them could, to be sure, find other work, they've been offered it, but they refuse: only libertinage suits them. Once again it's Noirceuil who'll have the first shot.

"And now behold the triumph of conjugal love. In all the world there's not a wife who cherishes her husband as that woman does," Duvergier declared, indicating a creature of some twenty-eight years, a perfect Aphrodite; "yes, she adores him, she is jealous too, but she cannot withstand her urges; she disguises herself, she's taken for a vestal, but every week she enters the lists with a score of men.

"I consider that other one quite as attractive," my informant went on, "and her position is truly extraordinary: her own husband prostitutes her. Mark you, he is passionately fond of her, and that could provide the explanation: he's witness to her proceedings, he's ready to pimp for his lady.

"Well," said she, "only two remain. Consider now that very attractive person. She enjoys an annual income

of over fifty thousand pounds and an excellent reputation; her taste is for women, notice how she ogles the others.

"Finally, the last of those ladies is unwed, she has great pretentions, is one of our most celebrated prudes; in society, were a man so much as to murmur the word love within her hearing, I declare I believe she'd strike him; whilst here in my little house she pays fortunes to get herself had fifty times a month.

"How now, Juliette? Do you need further examples? Or are these enough to make you decide?"

"I think you've persuaded me, Madame," I replied, "yes, I'll not turn up my nose at whatever little libidinous adventures you prepare for me. But I must give you fair warning: don't put yourself to any trouble on my account unless, where money is concerned, a minimum price of fifty *louis* is acceptable to whomever wishes my services."

"Fifty? My dear, you'll have your fifty *louis* a throw, never fear," cried Duvergier, overcome with joy. "I only wanted your agreement; money? Money presents no problem. Be gentle, be docile, be obedient, never say no; I'll find you mountains of money."

As it had grown late and as I feared lest Noirceuil become alarmed at the length of this first promenade I'd taken, I hastened back to be in time for dinner, most sincerely upset at not having seen some of those fifteen women in action or having been able to participate in it with them.

Mme. de Noirceuil was not entirely unmoved to see her rival established in her house; the uncouth and imperious tone in which her husband had enjoined her to obey me contributed not a little to her resentment of my presence; not a day passed when she did not weep from sore chagrin and envy: I was incomparably better lodged than she, better served, better fed, more magnificently dressed, having a carriage to myself whilst she was scarcely allowed the use of her husband's; little wonder that this woman developed a hatred for me. But so great was my appeal to Noirceuil's intellect that, whatever her feelings, and they must truly have been strong, I dwelt in perfect security from the least of their effects.

I hardly need stress, however, that love was not Noirceuil's motive for acting in this manner. He valued my company, for in his eyes I represented the means to committing crimes; did he, what with his perfidious imagination, did he need another reason for keeping me by him? That villain's disorders were faultlessly systematized. Every day, and nothing could have interfered with the ritual, Duvergier furnished him a maiden whose age, according to the requirements he laid down, for each of these girls he paid one hundred crowns, and their agreement further specified that if Noirceuil could supply proof positive that any one specimen was not absolutely mint, Duvergier must pay him twenty-five *louis* in damages and for breach of contract. Despite all these precautions, the example of my own self suggests to what an extent he could be deceived, and I dare say he very often was.

Now I must avow, my friends, that for a long time I'd been mightily eager to test Dorval's theories in action; my fingers were nigh to itching from impatience; I simply had to steal at any cost. I had yet to determine what I could do: I didn't doubt my abilities, but I needed someone to try them upon. Situated there in Noirceuil's house, conditions would have favored a stunning performance: his confidence in me was as complete as his wealth was immense and his disorders extreme: I could at any time and every day have laid hands on ten or twelve *louis,* he'd never have noticed their disappearance. But by some quirk of the imagination, by some curious way of reckoning, thanks to some feeling I'd perhaps have difficulty giving a clear explanation of, even to myself, I never wanted to wrong anyone as corrupt as I. I wanted to steal, and I wanted my victim to sustain grave hurt: the idea wonderfully heated my brain. Well now, what crime would I be committing in plundering Noirceuil? I considered his property as mine: I would simply be making off with what I already owned; thus, robbing Noirceuil would be meaningless, lacking the faintest trace of larceny. In short, had Noirceuil been a good man, I'd have bled him white; he was a wicked man, I respected him. In a moment or two you'll hear how I was unfaithful to him; I loved Noir-

ceuil for his libertinage, for his mental qualities; I was not by any means captivated by his person. I was ambitious, I took the longer view: the more men I saw, the greater my chances of finding one better than Noirceuil. And even if that luck should not befall me, collaboration with Duvergier must necessarily be profitable; and I could not throw away that money in the name of a quaint sentiment for Noirceuil. In observance of this scheme of behavior, I, as you may very well imagine, accepted an invitation I received from Duvergier several days after the interview I described a little while ago.

The party was to be given at the home of a millionaire; he was not prone to stint on his pleasures, 'twas in their weight in gold he recompensed those accommodating creatures who were disposed to satisfy his shameless whims.

Six of Duvergier's most winning protegées were to accompany me to the house of that Croesus; but I being the most distinguished of the troupe, his finer attentions were concentrated upon me, and my companions really only officiated as priestesses in the ceremony.

We arrived and at once we were introduced into a chamber hung in brown satin, a color and a material chosen, no doubt, to emphasize the fairness of the skin of the sultanas who were summoned there; straightway, the woman who had led us thither bade us undress. She swathed me in a filmy black and silver gauze gown, this costume setting me apart from the others: these tires, the divan I was instructed to recline upon whilst the others, remaining standing, demurely awaited orders, the special attention shown to me—I was speedily convinced that I was to occupy a central position in the festivities.

Mondor enters. He was a man of seventy, short, squat, but keen of eye, and libertine. He gazes round, examining my companions; he utters words of praise for each, then he comes up to me and pays me some of those compliments such as are to be heard from none but a slave trader's lips.

"Very well," says he to his aide, "if these young ladies are ready, I believe we can get on with the job.

"My angel," quoth he, "I do believe these whores are putting the wind in my sail."

All seven of us surrounded him. To each the duenna handed a bundle of sturdy withes; then, one after the other, we belabored the wrinkled and seamed backside of that poor Mondor.

"Oh Lord," the sorry old dog groaned, "I'm apparently reduced to taking desperate remedies."

Sweating, bleeding, breathless, the knave cast a troubled eye about the company.

'Twas at that point the amiable duenna spoke up, busying herself applying eau de Cologne to her master's lacerated buttocks.

"Heavenly creature," said Mondor, drawing me into a secluded room after having dismissed the other women, "there is yet another service you may perform for me and that is the one I await my divinest pleasures from. I would have you imitate your friends, you're to do as did they."

I inclined and in a tone at once dignified and respectful announced that my one desire was to comply with his.

"But can you?" he cried.

"I most assuredly can," I assured him.

"Is it so? Adorable child, wonderful child," he stammered, "it is then within your power to grant my request?"

When we had entered that little room my eyes had immediately lit upon a package of some size, containing, so I guessed, things which would better my financial situation; that same instant I had conceived an overpowering wish to steal it—but how? I was nude. Where could I conceal the package? Although it was not long, it was bulky, about as thick as a man's arm.

"Your Honor," I asked, "are you going to fetch in someone to help us?"

"No," the financier answered, "my custom is to taste this final delight in solitude; so voluptuous the gestures which they wring out of me—"

"Nonetheless," I broke in peremptorily, "it cannot be done without some assistance."

"It can't, my dear?"

"It cannot, Monsieur."

"Eh then, if that be the case, pray go and see if one of the women is still about."

However, I had not budged. "Sir," I pointed out, "I am not familiar with your house; and I am, furthermore, little disposed to move for, do you see, the state I am in—"

"The state? Ah, yes, the state. I'll ring then—"

"I beg you not under any circumstances to ring. You surely cannot expect me to appear before your servants thus?"

"But my woman is out there, she'll come—"

"Not at all. She is escorting the girls home."

"Damn my eyes!" he cried. "I cannot bear these delays."

And Mondor dashed from the room, vanishing into the apartment we'd just come from; and thus the idiot left me alone amidst his treasures. No need to think twice: in Noirceuil's house I had had the very best reasons for restraining myself, here in Mondor's I could give vent to this immense longing I had to commit a theft: I seize the opportunity, the instant my man's back is turned I pounce upon the package, my hair is done up in a large chignon, that is where I hide my prize. No sooner had I stowed it away out of sight than Mondor called me. The girls had not left; would I please come into the apartment? For he preferred to have this final scene enacted in the same surrounding where the earlier ones had taken place. All went well, nothing was remarked, I readjusted myself, two carriages were waiting for us, and, hugely contented, Mondor bade us farewell after having distributed generous largesses to us.

When I had returned to the house of Noirceuil I shut myself up in privacy.

Wrapped up in that parcel were sixty thousand francs in notes of credit payable to the bearer, already signed and requiring no endorsement.

As I was about to put these spoils away, I noticed that by some extraordinary coincidence, while I'd been off stealing somebody had been robbing me: my secretary had been forced open, missing were five or six *louis* I'd kept in a drawer. Advised of the fact, Noirceuil assured

me that only one Gode could have been responsible for it. This Gode was an extremely pretty girl of twenty whom Noirceuil had attached to my service since my entry into his household, whom he quite often had make a third in our pleasures, and whom, in the spirit of jollity he got pregnant. She was now in her sixth month.

"Do you really believe it could have been she?"

"I am certain of it, Juliette. Have you noticed her nervous manner? How uneasily she withstood our interrogating glances?"

Therewith, heedless of all save my perfidious selfishness, completely forgetting my resolution never to work injury upon those who were my kinsmen in villainy, tears in my eyes I besought Noirceuil to have the culprit arrested.

"I am perfectly willing to do as you suggest," Noirceuil replied with a chilly expressionlessness which I should have interpreted accurately had my preoccupied mind permitted me to remark it; "however, you're not to be deprived of any pleasure her punishment might afford you. The scoundrel may very well wriggle out of her plight. She's young and attractive, you know."

I cried, "I am in despair."

"I dare say you must be, my beloved," Noirceuil pursued quietly, "for you ambition to see her hanged; but it will be a good three months before they get her to the scaffold. I recommend that we somewhat prolong the wretch's suffering; what say we make them extend over the rest of her life? It's a simple matter. I'll have her confined to a dungeon in Bicêtre; how old is she? Twenty? She could rot half a century in prison."

"Ah, my friend, a splendid plan!"

"I only ask that you let me postpone putting it into operation until tomorrow; which would give me time to clothe this scheme with all the details needed to enhance its charm."

I embrace Noirceuil; he has his carriage sent for and two hours later returns with the writ necessary to our enterprise.

"She's ours," says the traitor; "we may now amuse ourselves. Let's play our parts convincingly." Later, after we had dined and gone to his dressing-room, he

summons the poor girl. "Gode, my dear Gode," says he, "you know what my feelings for you are, the time is approaching when I shall want to demonstrate them."

"Oh Sire, you are too kind—"

"No, my child, I really am not, please, expressions of thanks embarrass me. You owe me none, of that you may be absolutely sure; this that you take for kindness is pure self-indulgence, the pleasure is all my own. From now on you have nothing to fear, everything has been settled owing to the steps I have lately taken; whereas you may not live in regal style, you shall never lack for a crust of bread."

Failing entirely to perceive the underlying significance of these words, Gode sprinkled tears of joy upon the hands of her fancied benefactor.

"Eh then, Gode," said my lover, "I ask for your co-operation this one last time; though I am not much taken by pregnant women."

Never had I seen Noirceuil so aroused.

"A criminal thought excites most wondrously, does it not?" I whispered to him.

"Tell me then," said Noirceuil, so soon as Gode had been led away, and as he returned to me double the sum removed from my secretary, "isn't that a hundred times better than if she had been confided to an uncertain and perhaps merciful justice? We'd not have been able to exert any control over her destiny whereas," he smiled, "this way it is in our hands forever."

"O Noirceuil, thou are an evil man . . . and what joys thou hast fashioned for thyself!"

Why is it that I too could not help but taste the wildest pleasures in the infamy you committed?"

"Precisely because it is one," Noirceuil answered; "there is no imaginable infamy that does not give pleasure."

"O Noirceuil!" I cried, unable to contain myself, "it is certainly true that what we have just done has given me vast pleasure, but I'd have had ten times more had I seen her hang—"

"Come now, admit the whole truth: had you hanged her yourself."

"Yes, yes! I admit it!"

"All living creatures are born isolate; from birth, they have no need one of the other: abstain from tampering with men, leave them in their pristine natural state, refrain from civilizing them and each will find his own way, his food, his shelter, without his fellow-beings' help.

"When one gives something, it's to receive something in return: that's the law of Nature; and, here, in giving assistance to the weak, in stripping off some quantity of one's strength so as to clad one's inferior in it, what does the strong get from the bargain? The strong gives a lot and gains nothing; which is why he never once subscribed to this nonsense; it deserves no respect from us."

I interrupted excitedly. "There is then no kind of real bond between another human being and myself? Is it then so that the only manner in which I need act with this other individual, is to wrest from him all I possibly can and give him as little?"

"Precisely," Noirceuil replied. "For whatever you give to him is lost to you, and you gain proportionately as you take.

"Reap a goodly harvest, dear Juliette, Nature is bountiful; emulate the spider, spin your webs, and mercilessly devour everything that Nature's wise and liberal hand casts into the meshes."

"My beloved!" I cried, hugging Noirceuil to me, "how enormous is my debt to you for ridding me of the ignorance and prejudice brewed in my spirit! your sublime lessons are unto my heart what the healing dew is to sun scorched vegetation."

"Juliette," quoth Noircueil, "these reflexions demonstrate your weakness—and betray your sensibility. My child, one must be strong and hard when one decides to be wicked.

"Once one has realized that we must all die someday, does it make any real difference whether it be on a platform or in a bed?"

I gazed at him admiringly. "Unusual man, charming individual," I exclaimed, "my devotion to you shall only grow as you give me accumulating proof of your disdain for vulgar prejudices; the more criminal you

exhibit yourself my avid eyes, the deeper my heart's veneration for you shall be. I aspire only to imitate you—"

"Ah," murmured Noirceuil, "I have never beheld a creature more analagous to me; methinks I'd adore her if 'twere in my power to love a woman. . . . Wouldst imitate me, Juliette? I defy thee to do so."

Noirceuil was in a state of agitation, sufficient to convince me that the avowal of his errors excited him almost as much as their very performance.

"Stay, stay, we are too few," says Noirceuil, who was little fond of solitary pleasures.

That was the moment when one of Gode's captors returned with news of her entry into the Prison of Bicêtre.

"Jolly good," said Noirceuil, sending the man on his way with a two-*louis* pourboire; "one cannot," he confided to me in a whisper, a smile on his lips, "overpay the messenger bringing tidings of such welcome events.

"Juliette, no, there is no such thing as genuine pity, there is no pity save that wherefrom we calculate to profit. *Thou dost shed tears to behold the sore plight of thine unhappy neighbor; thy tears bear witness to thine own wretchedness, or to thy dread of being more miserable still than him for whom thou thinkest to weep.* Well, what voice is this, if not that of fear? whence is this fear born, if not of egoism?"

"O Noirceuil!" I cried, "how often have you provided proof of it. . . . And still you are loath to tell me—"

"Juliette," that amiable personage replied, "such avowals can hardly be fitting reward for your behavior. . . . At any rate, I shall open my heart to you—in due time: when I feel you are truly worthy to hear the secrets I have to disclose. But before then you shall have to undergo several tests."

And his manservant having come to announce that the Minister, an intimate friend of Noirceuil, was waiting in the drawing room, we separated.

I lost no time making a most advantageous investment of the sixty thousand francs I had stolen from Mondor. However sure I was that Noirceuil would have approved

the theft, I could not have mentioned it to him without also divulging my infidelity and, had he learned of that, my lover would surely have worried; prudence counseled me to hold my tongue, and I turned all my thoughts to increasing, the sum of my revenues. The occasion soon presented itself in the form of another party organized by Mme. Duvergier.

We were four; at a café near the Porte Saint-Antoine I was joined by three charming creatures; a carriage was there waiting for us, and we were soon in Saint-Maur, at the delightful house of my lord Duc Dennemar. My companions were of rare beauty, youthful and as fresh as they were sweet to behold: the eldest was under eighteen, Minette was her name; she pleased me so wonderfully well I could not resist caressing her passionately; another was sixteen years old, the last fourteen. Very exacting in the choice of her victims, from the woman who conducted us to Saint-Maur I learned that I was the only courtisan of the quartet; my youth, my looks had persuaded the Duc to suspend self-imposed rules which forbade him commerce with worldly women. The other three were seamstresses who knew absolutely nothing of the work they were about to perform; they were decent girls, properly brought up, had only been seduced by the large sums the Duc offered, and by the assurance that, restricting himself to whippings, he'd not impair their virginity: each of us was to receive fifty *louis;* you shall decide whether or not we earned our pay.

We were ushered into a magnificent apartment; our guide bade us undress and await the orders it would please his lordship to signify to us.

That was my opportunity to examine at leisure my three young colleagues' naïve graces, their delicate and gentle charms. What supple, willowy figures, what faultless skins, breasts that made one's mouth water, thighs beyond words appetizing, for pink plumpness, for sweetness their charming behinds were beyond comparison. For the better part of an hour, awaiting the time when we'd have his Grace's desires to cope with, we dallied there, frolickingly and impetuously too satisfying our own; and then at last a tall lackey, almost naked, came

with instructions that we all four make ourselves ready, but that the eldest would be first. This placed me third on the list; when my turn came, I entered the pleasure sanctuary of this contemporary Sardanapalus; and the experience I am going to relate is in no particular different from that which befell each of the other three girls.

The cabinet in which the Duc received me was circular and everywhere paneled with mirrors; in the center was a column of porphyry, rising to height of some ten feet, and before it was a dais. I was told to mount upon it; the valet we'd seen before and who cooperated in his master's pleasure-ceremonies, attached my feet to bronze rings fastened to the block I was standing on, then he raised my arms, secured them by cords, drew them high above my head. It was only then the Duc approached. Totally nude from waist down, a simple vest of brown satin covered his torso; his arms were bare to the shoulder; under his left arm he had a bundle of withes, thin and flexible, a black ribbon held them together. Of some forty years, the Duc had an exceedingly somber and harsh physiognomy, and I judged that his moral character was not much less severe than his outward appearances.

"Lubin," said he to his valet, "this one looks better than the others. A more interesting face. 'Tis a pity. She'll but suffer the more."

I emit a shriek.

"Goodness! She's not insensitive. Too bad. We've scarce begun."

Thereupon I feel his talon-like fingernails dig deep in several places. More screams from me only animate this scoundrel.

"We are about to begin," said Dennemar when at last the arrangements were complete; "I earnestly request you to be patient, inasmuch as these proceedings may last a certain while."

Lubin lays hands on me straight off. I am still decked in that terrible garland; the barbarian deliberately presses it against my skin.

"Get out of here," he told me directly after Lubin had performed, "I've got to put your youngest companion to work before I call you back." The door opened,

in the adjoining room I discovered the two others who'd gone before me—but, great heavens! what a state they were in! It outdid mine; the sight of their bodies—so pretty, so fair, so delicious—was now enough to inspire horror; the poor creatures were weeping, moaning at having consented to such a party; and I, prouder, of sterner stuff and more vindictive, I thought of nothing but material revenge. A door stood ajar, I peered through it: there was the Duc's bedchamber, I went stealthily into it. My glance fell at once upon three objects: a fat purse bulging with gold, a superb diamond, and a very fine timepiece. Hastily, I open the window, I notice, below and opposite, a little outbuilding forming an angle with the wall and close by the gate we entered when we came. Quick as a flash, I strip off one of my stockings, wrap the three objects in it, drop the bundle into the bush growing in the corner I've just mentioned; the bundle sinks down into the leaves, it's out of sight. I return to my companions. The very next moment Lubin came in to fetch us: to consummate his sacrifice, the high priest needed all four victims at once.

From this ordeal we arose in a condition which could be better described by the surgeon who was ten days laboring to efface the insigna left by this abominable scene.

Despite my hurts, and they were not inconsiderable, I kept my wits about me as we were leaving and, seizing a favorable moment, slipped over to the bush, plucked out my treasure, tucked it under my skirts, and thus recompensed for what I had suffered, was able to reckon the outing a success. Confronting Duvergier, I gave her a sharp scolding for having exposed me to such an insulting experience; what right had she to do so, I demanded, when knowing full well that I was no longer interested in being sacrificed to her greed? I went home, installed myself in my bedroom and had Noirceuil notified that I was unwell and would like to keep my bed undisturbed for a few days. Not one whit in love with me—or with anyone else—still less given to wasting his time comforting the infirm or the languishing, giving evidence of a superb and doctrinal unconcern, Noirceuil never once presented himself at my bedside; his

wife, milder of temper and more political, visited me twice, but abstained from shedding tears on my account; by the tenth day I was so well mended that I looked to be, if anything, in better condition than before. I then bent my gaze upon my catch: the purse contained three hundred *louis,* the diamond was worth fifty thousand francs, the watch a thousand crowns. As I had the other sum, I invested this one too; combined, they fetched nearly twelve thousand pounds a year; and it seemed to me that, thus endowed, it was high time I set to work for myself instead of continuing the toy of the avarice of others.

Thus did a year go by; during it I made my own arrangements and from what a number of adventures earned me pocketed the entirety. But, as chance so had it, none of these parties provided me an opportunity to exercise my thieving abilities; for the rest, I remained ever the pupil to Noirceuil, ever the butt of his lewd sports, ever the hated enemy of his wife.

Although our relationship was characterized by indifference, Noirceuil, who, without loving me, had a wonderful fondness for my mind and conversation, continued to pay me a very handsome allowance; all my needs were supplied, and in addition I had twenty-four thousand francs a year for my pleasures; join to that the twelve thousand *livres* annuity I had bought for myself, and you'll agree I was not badly off. Caring rather little for men, 'twas with two charming women I satisfied my desires; they had two female friends who now and again were of the company, and we'd then execute every imaginable species of extravagence.

One day, a friend of the woman I was most attracted to solicited my sympathy in behalf of a cousin who had run into some major difficulties; I was told that I had once; if I wished, the young man would be very willing to come and recite the whole story to me. Moved, despite myself, by the desire to make someone happy—a fatal desire wherefor the hand of Nature, who had not created me to be virtuous, was to see to it that I be chastened speedily—I accept; the young man appears. My stars! what is my surprise to behold Lubin. I make

an effort to conceal my emotion. Lubin assures me that he has left the Duc's employ, he spins out a wild and utterly confused yarn; I promise to do what I can for him; the traitor walks out very satisfied, says he, to have found me again for he'd been hunting a year after me. For several days I heard nothing; I fretted over the unpleasant consequences this encounter might well have, I even felt a growing resentment against the friend of my boudoir companion who had lured me into this trap although I had no way of knowing whether or not she had done so intentionally. Such were my preoccupations when one evening, as I emerged from the Comédie Italienne, six men halted my carriage, leveled pistols at the servants accompanying me, instantly forced me to get out, then pushed me into a waiting cab, shouting to the driver, by way of instruction: *"To the Hôpital!"*

"My God," I said to myself, "I am lost."

Gathering courage at once, however, I turned to my captors:

"Sirs," I demanded, "have you not made a mistake?"

"I beg your pardon, Mademoiselle, we may perhaps be making a mistake," replied one of those knaves whom I soon recognized as Lubin himself, "yes, we are in all likelihood gravely mistaken, for 'tis to the scaffold we ought to conduct you; but if, until final enquiries have been made, in sending you no further than the Hôpital, the police, out of consideration for Monsieur de Noirceuil, are reluctant to give you, what you deserve immediately, but we nonetheless trust the delay will be brief."

"Why, very well," said I in a bold tone, "we'll see. But take care, my young blade, take care above all lest they who for the moment, fancying themselves in the stronger position, dare attack me so imprudently now, do not come soon to regret their insolence."

I am cast into a foul little dungeon where for thirty-six hours I remain absolutely alone, hearing nothing but the coming and going of my jailers.

You might perhaps be amused, dear friends, to know what my frame of mind during this incarceration. I shall be frank with you: the following description is, I believe, exact.

As in prosperity, calm in adversity; dismayed, no, coldly furious to discover myself a dupe for having given virtue's case a single instant of heed; resolved—profoundly determined never again to permit it the faintest entry into my heart; some amount of chagrin, perhaps, to see my fortunes temporarily ebb; but not a grain of regret, no remorse at all, not the shadow of a resolution to turn over a new leaf if I were ever to be restored to society; not the tiniest intention to compose my differences with religion if I were to have to die. Such was I inwardly; what I say is true. Still in all, I was not absolutely free of worry—but in bygone days, when I was well-behaved, had I been any freer? Worry! ah, 'tis an old story.

Such were my thoughts; you were curious to know them, I sketch them for you; and who is fitter to hear these confessions than you, my dearest friends?

"O Noirceuil!" I cried upon recognizing my lover, "after all the grievous things I have done, how could I still be of interest to you?"

He gazed at me. "Juliette," said he a little while later when we had been left in privacy, "I have nothing to reproach you for: the manner in which we have been living together eliminates the disagreeable circumstances that make reproaches possible. You were free. Love had no share in our arrangements. The single question was of confidence. In this I have acted solely through selfishness, and I swear to you that if my prick were to get one ace stiffer from seeing you hang than from delivering you, I'd not hesitate a second. But your company pleases me, I'd be deprived of it if they hanged you; you've done enough to deserve the rope, by the way—they were ready to use it on you; and I respect you precisely for that reason, you are entitled to my respect, it would be all the greater had you merited the wheel. . . . Come along with me, you're free. No demonstrations, please, above all no expressions of gratitude, I abhor it."

And remarking that, overcome, I was in spite of myself about to express thanks, Noirceuil backed off a pace and addressed these words to me:

"Since you will persist, Juliette," said he, his eyes

flashing, "you'll not leave this place until I have proved to you the utter absurdity of the feelings to which, in defiance of your intelligence, your heart's impoverishment seems to be contriving to make you succumb."

Then, forcing me to sit down, and seating himself in a chair facing me, he entered into the matter:

"My dear girl, you also know that I am loath to let pass an opportunity to shape your heart or to enlighten your mind; therefore allow me to teach you what gratitude is.

"Consider well what I say, Juliette, and judge for yourself how incredibly ridiculous, and dangerous, it must always be, to do good unto your fellow men. In the light of my analysis of gratitude, observe, my dear, how precious little I want yours, and think how eager I must be not to find myself in the grave position of having rendered you any service at all. I repeat it once again: in liberating you from this prison I do nothing for your sake, it is in nobody's interest but mine own I act; believe that, absolutely; now let's be off."

We betook ourselves to the office of the clerk; Noirceuil spoke:

"Your Honor," said he, addressing one of the magistrates there, "this young lady, recovering her freedom, does not intend to conceal the name of the culprit who committed the theft of which she has been erroneously accused; my friend has just assured me that the individual you seek is one of the three girls who were there with her at the residence in Saint-Maur of his Grace, Duc Dennemar. Say, Juliette, do you recollect the girl's name?"

"I do indeed, Monsieur," I answered, instantly perceiving what the perfidious Noirceuil was about. "She was the prettiest of the three, her age must be eighteen or nineteen, and she is called Minette."

"That is all we want to know, Mademoiselle," quoth the man of the law; "will you seal your deposition under oath?"

"I shall, your Honor, of course," I replied, raising my right hand. "Minette is guilty and alone responsible for the theft committed in the house of Monsieur le Duc de Dennemar."

We left and promptly settled ourselves in Noirceuil's coach.

"Well, my dove, without me you'd never have been able to play that nasty little trick. And yet, my role in the thing was modest: indeed, I merely set the stage; I felt certain, and I was right, that there was no need to prepare you for what was to come. You carried it off faultlessly. Kiss me, my angel. . . . Ah, you behaved like a goddess. Minette will be hanged; and, when one is guilty, 'tis delicious, not only to wriggle out of a scrape, but to have an innocent person put to death in one's stead."

"O Noirceuil," I cried, "I do love you so! verily, of all the men in this world, only you were a fit companion for me; I failed you, and you shall make me regret it—"

"Come, Juliette, have no fear," Noirceuil replied; "you have committed a crime, do me the favor of feeling no guilt therefor; it is a virtuous act I expect you to repent. You had no cause to do this thing behind my back," continued my lover as we drove toward his mansion; "I have no objection if you wish to do a little whoring, provided you are motivated by greed or lust; whatsoever has its origin in such vices is totally respectable, according to my view. But you ought to be cautious in your dealings with Duvergier's clientele: she traffics with and procures for none but libertines whose cruel passions could easily bring you to your downfall. Really, Juliette, you've missed acquiring whole fortunes at a stroke. Anyhow," Noirceuil went on, "the source of all this trouble is that deplorable Lubin who, suspected by his employer, swore to make the most thorough investigation. But, don't fret, my beloved, you're avenged: Lubin entered Bicêtre yesterday, he'll stay there the rest of his life. You must know that it is to the excellent Saint-Fond, Minister and my great friend, you owe your deliverance and the suitable conclusion of the affair. The case against you was made up, watertight; they were going to have you in the dock tomorrow; twenty-two witnesses' evidence had been assembled. Well, had there been five hundred, our influence would still have drowned them out; this influence is immense, Juliette, and between the two of us, Saint-Fond and I, we can

regularly expect, by means of a word, a gesture, and whenever we like, to untie the rope knotted around the neck of the worst criminal on earth, and to have a saint mount the scaffold and die in his place. That's how things are when idiot princes are on the throne. Everyone in their vicinity leads them round by the nose, mulets them, and those drab robots, while fancying they do their own governing, actually reign through us, as our instruments; or, if you prefer, our passions are the sole sovereign in this kingdom. We could take our revenge upon Dennemar too, I'm equipped with all that's needed for that; but he's as libertine as we, his eccentricities prove it. Never attack those who resemble us, that's my creed, you might subscribe to it too. The Duc knows he was wrong in behaving as he did; he's ashamed of himself today, he relinquishes title to the stolen goods and would even be very happy to see you again; I conferred with him, all he asked was that someone hang, and, you see, someone shall: he's satisfied, so are we. My advice is, however, that you not visit the old miser; we know perfectly well that if he desires to see you it is only to persuade you to take pity on Lubin: well, don't. I too once had that Lubin in my service, he cost me a great deal of money, and so disgusted me that I have, more than once, thought of having him packed off to some jail; he's in jail now, it seems to me right that he stay there. As for the Minister, he'd like to meet you; it will be this evening, you're to sup with him. He's an excessively libertine individual. . . . Tastes, proclivities, fantasies . . . passions, vices *ad infinitum;* I hardly need recommend the extremest submissiveness—it is the one way in which you can demonstate the gratitude whose effects you very mistakenly wished to shower upon me."

"My soul is being cast in the mould of yours, Noirceuil," I answered coolly, "I cease offering you thanks now that you have made it plain that what you did, you did in your own behalf; and verily, methinks I love thee better and more since I've come to see that I owe thee nothing. As for the submission you request of me, it shall be entire; dispose of me, I am thine; a woman, I know my place, and that dependence is my lot."

"No, not absolutely," Noirceuil rejoined, "your easy circumstances, your wit, your character set you very definitely outside that form of slavery. To it I only submit *wifely women* and *whores,* and in this I comply with the laws of Nature who, as you must observe everywhere, requires that such-like beings crawl and fawn; intellect, talents, parts, wealth and influence separate some from the other creatures whom Nature made to comprise the class of the weak. Juliette, hast passed a day and a half in prison? You deserve some sort of restitution. Rascal, I know of your twelve thousand a year—you hid that from me; it matters not, I was aware of your transactions, I'll get you ten thousand more tomorrow, and the Minister has asked me to give you this document: it entitles you to an annual pension of a thousand *écus,* interest upon capital bequeathed to the hospitals; the sick will have a few less bowls of soup and you a few fripperies more, the universal scheme shan't be dislocated for that. Which, it appears to me, makes five and twenty thousand pounds a year for you, not counting your appointments, which will continue to be paid to you in full and punctually."

"Can human laws be so incredibly injust, Noirceuil? The innocent Gode groans in one prison cell, from another the guilty Juliette emerges covered with the blessings of fortune."

"Great heaven!" I said to myself once, re-established in my luxurious quarters, I began to take stock of the splendid situation I was going to enjoy—and to contemplate the revenue I was to become mistress of, "oh great heaven! the life I am to lead! Fortune, Providence, Fate, Universal Agent, whoever thou art, whatever be thy name, if 'tis thus thou dost treat those who surrender themselves into the arms of wickedness, how can one help but follow that career? Eh. 'Tis done, I'll never enter into any other."

My maids were waiting with my bath. I spent two hours there, two more at my toilette; fresh as a rose, I appeared at the Minister's supper, and, so they assured me, looked more lovely than the very sun itself, of whose light a few rogues had cheated me for the space of two days.

# TOME II

Monsieur de Saint-Fond was a man of some fifty years: endowed with a keen wit, with much intelligence and much duplicity, his character was very traitorous, very ferocious, infinitely proud; 'twas in the supremest degree he had the art of robbing France, and that of distributing warrants for arbitrary arrest, the which he both sold at a merry price and himself made us of, according to the dictates of his most idle fancy. Above twenty thousand persons of either sex and all ages were at that moment, owing to his instructions, languishing in the various royal dungeons the kingdom is studded everywhere with; and "Of these twenty thousand souls," he confided to me one day, a smile upon his lips, "not a single one is guilty of anything." D'Albert, Chief Justice of the High Court at Paris, was also at the Minister's supper. It was only as we, Noirceuil and I, were arriving that he told me of D'Albert's presence there.

"You ought," he counseled me, "to show as much deference to that gentleman as to the other; your fate

was decided by him a mere twelve hours ago; he spared you. I had Saint-Fond extend an invitation to him so as to give you an opportunity to repay him for his thoughtfulness."

The seraglio* at the disposal of the three men included, in addition to Mme. de Noirceuil and myself, four charming whores. Of Duvergier's selection, these creatures were still virgins. Eglée was how the youngest was called—she was thirteen, honey-haired, a little enchantress. Then there was Lolotte, fair as Flora was she; such a glow of health as distinguished her has become rare indeed; she was only lately turned fifteen. Henriette was sixteen years old, and combined about her person more charms than did ever poet ascribe to the Three Graces. Lindane was the eldest, she was seventeen, superbly made, the expressiveness of her eyes positively took one's breath away.

As well there were on hand six youths ranging in age from fifteen to twenty; naked, their hair arranged in feminine style, they served the table. And so it was each libertine had to do his bidding four lust-objects, two of one sex and two of the other. None of the corps had as yet put in an appearance when Noirceuil led me into the salon and introduced me to D'Albert and Saint-Fond who, after embracing me, dallying with me, praising me for a quarter of an hour or more, declared themselves right pleased to have me of the company.

"It's a delicious little rascal, this one," quoth Noirceuil, "who through her unconditional submission to them would indicate to her judges how thankful she is they saved her life."

"I'd have regretted depriving her of it," said D'Albert. "However it is not without good reason Themis is represented wearing a blindfold. And you'll agree with me, that we ought always to have one over our own eyes whenever it is one such pretty little thing as this we have to judge."

"I promise her lifelong impunity," said Saint-Fond, "total impunity. She is at liberty to do absolutely anything she likes, without fear."

* Apartments reserved for wives and concubines; harems.

"Let me take the same oath," said D'Albert. "Indeed, I shall go further: tomorrow there will be delivered to her a letter from the Chancellor, which will in advance nullify any court action any tribunal in the realm might eventually be induced to take against her. But Saint-Fond, I have yet something else in mind. So far we have tended to dismiss crime, to connive at it; we ought rather encourage it, don't you think? I'd like to have you arrange to have Juliette rewarded for the misdeeds I expect her to commit: bonuses in the form of pensions running from, let us say, two thousand to twenty-five thousand francs a year, the sums depending upon the feats she proves capable of."

"It should seem to me, Juliette," said Noirceuil, "that you have just now been given the solidest motives both to allow your passions the broadest scope possible, and to hide none of your extravagances from us. But I fain must say, gentlemen," my lover continued before I had a chance to reply, "you put to wonderful purpose the authority vested in you by the laws and the monarch of this our beloved country."

"Eh, we do what we can with the means we possess," was Saint-Fond's candid response; "one always labors best in one's own behalf. Our office is to safeguard and promote the welfare of the King's subjects; in ensuring our own and this engaging child's, are we not carrying out our duties?"

He led me into a boudoir, closed the door, invited me to undress. He spoke to me while I removed my clothes. "I have been assured you are very compliant. My desires are a bit loathsome, I know, but you are intelligent. I have done you outstanding service; I shall do more: you are wicked, you are vindictive—very well," said he, tendering me six *lettres de cachet* which required only to be filled in with the names of whomever I chose to have imprisoned for an indeterminate period, "here are some toys, amuse yourself with them; and here, take this, it is a diamond worth about a thousand *louis,* payment for the pleasure that is mine in making your acquaintance this evening. What? No, no, my dear, take it all, it is yours, it cost me nothing. Money for purchasing the gem came from State funds, not out of my pocket."

"Indeed, my lord, your generosity leaves me confused—"

"Oh, it will go farther still. I'd like to have you in my household. I need a woman who will stop at nothing. I give dinners from time to time; you strike me as the ideal person for handling the poisoning."

"What, my lord, do you poison people?"

"There's often nothing else to do with them. There are so many individuals one must put out of the way, you see. Scruples? I? Surely not. It's simply a technical problem. I shouldn't suppose you have any objections to poison?"

"None at all," I returned, "not in principle. I can swear to you that no conceivable crime affrights me, that every one I have perpetrated so far has delighted me unspeakably. It is merely that until now I have never administered poison; only afford me the chance, I ask no more."

"Charming creature," Saint-Fond murmured. "Come, Juliette, kiss me. And so it is agreed? Good. Once again I give you my solemn oath: never shall you have any punishment to fear. Look here," and he tendered me a little box, "tonight at supper I shall seat next to you that one of the whores I have selected for the test; ingratiate yourself, caress her thoroughly, feint is the sure cloak of crime, deceive her as artfully and as entirely as you can and at dessert cast this powder into one of the glasses of wine that will be placed before her: its effect will be swift; by that token I shall learn whether you are or are not the woman I need. Succeed, and the post I propose is yours."

"Ah, my lord," said I heatedly, "I am at your orders. Issue them, issue them, let me show you what I can do."

"Delightful, delightful. . . . But now let us distract ourselves, mademoiselle, your libertinage fetches my prick to a pretty stand. Eh, not too fast, however; we must undertake nothing until I have impressed upon you the high importance of observing very strictly this formula: you must be respectful. Apart from the eminent position I occupy, my birth is illustrious, my fortune enormous, and my credit superior even to the King's: my station and condition make vanity unavoidable: the

powerful man who, beguiled by the always meretricious popularity he may sometimes enjoy, allows himself to be approached too nearly, suffers as a consequence a loss of face, of prestige, is humiliated, abased, sinks into the estateless ruck. Nature put the great on earth as she did the stars in the sky: they are to shed light upon the world, never to descend to its level. Such is my pride. I like servants to kneel before me, prefer always to employ an interpreter when holding parley with that vile rabble known as the people; and I detest everybody who is less than my peer."

"In that case," said I, "my lord must despise a great share of society, since there are very few persons in this world who can pretend to be his equal."

"Precious few, mademoiselle, that is correct; which is why I despise everybody on earth except the two friends who are here this evening, and a very limited number of others: for all the rest my hatred is unbounded."

"But, my lord," I took the liberty to say to this despot, "do not your libertine caprices now and again constrain you to step down from the pinnacle upon which, so it does seem to me, you would prefer to remain at all times?"

"No," Saint-Fond replied, "there's no contradiction here, it's all of a piece: for minds conformed like mine, the humiliation implicit in certain acts of libertinage serves only as fuel to the fire of our pride."

The paradox is readily to be explained: one does that which no one else is able to do; hence, one is unique in one's species. 'Tis this singularity pride feeds upon.

By then I was standing naked before him. "Ah Juliette, you are magnificent," quoth the haughty bawd. "They told me you were superb, but upon my soul you surpass your reputation."

And though my misgivings were not negligible, I vanquished them; it was to my interest to prove myself mettlesome.

We quitted the boudoir; as we were traversing the apartments separating it from the assembly hall, Saint-Fond reminded me of the box I was carrying.

"Indeed," said I, laughing, "does crime linger in your brain even after the illusion has been dissipated?"

"What," the dreadful man retorted, "did you then mistake my proposal for something conceived in a moment of excitement, and destined to be forgot straightway the moment was over?"

"I presumed it was only that."

"You were wrong; this is one of those necessary things whose anticipated doing does very certainly stir up our passions but which, though conceived during a transport, must nonetheless be calmly carried out afterwards."

"But are your friends privy to it?"

"Can you doubt?"

"There will be a scene—"

"I dare say. We are accustomed to them. Ah, if the rose bushes in Noirceuil's garden could speak and say to what nutriments they owe their crimson magnificence. . . . Juliette, my dear Juliette, such ones as are we consider that there is not, that there cannot be, one execution too many."

"Then be easy, my lord, I have sworn obedience to you, I shall keep my oath."

We reappeared in the others' midst; they had been waiting for us, all the women were by now there. We had no sooner returned than D'Albert signaled the desire to repair to the boudoir with Mme. Noirceuil, Henriette, Lindane and two youths, and it was not until later, when I saw him in action, that I was able to form a precise idea of his tastes.

Imagine, good friends, imagine my surprise when I beheld Mme. Noirceuil guided very ceremoniously to the table and invited to take the chair next mine. I leaned towards Saint-Fond, who had placed himself to my left, and whispered, "My lord, is this the woman you have designated to be the victim?"

"She is," replied the Minister, "and pray master your dismay, it does you scant credit in my eyes—another hint of this pusillanimity, let me warn you, and you shall lose my esteem forever."

So I sat down; the meal was no less delicious than libertine, the women, only partially and loosely clad.

But words cannot describe that divinely voluptuous scene; only an engraver could have rendered it properly, and yet it is doubtful he would have had time to capture

those many expressions, all those attitudes, for lust very quickly overwhelmed the actors and the drama was soon ended.

We returned to table.

"Tomorrow," said the Minister, "I am to prepare and dispatch a *lettre de cachet;* the man concerned is guilty of some rather unusual misconduct. He is a libertine who, like you, Noirceuil, adores giving his wife to strangers; this wife—it will strike you as incomprehensible, I know—this wife has been so silly as to complain about usage a good many other women crave. The respective families have become entangled in the affair, I have been asked to have the husband confined."

"Excessively severe punishment," Noirceuil muttered.

"Far too lenient in my opinion," said D'Albert, "there are dozens of countries where they put such fellows to death."

"Hear that, will you! 'Tis but too typical. You gentlemen of the law," said Noirceuil, "are only happy when blood is shed."

"True, that not uncommonly happens," D'Albert admitted, "but where is the disadvantage in converting one's chores into pleasures?"

"Quite," said Saint-Fond. "Common sense is on our side. But to return to the case of the man we were discussing a moment ago. You will agree with me that it is shocking, the number of wives who are behaving like fools nowadays."

"It is lamentable," said Noirceuil. "One comes across nothing but women who fancy that fulfilling their duty to their husbands begins and ends with preserving their own honor, and who, in order that they acquire and remain in possession of this shoddy virtue of theirs, expect those husbands to pay the price of constantly foregoing everything that stands at variance with conventional pleasures. Ha! fair ladies, we couldn't care less; we have only one concern, and it is this: that you anticipate our desire, that you satisfy them all with alacrity and unscrupulously; endeavour to please us, metamorphose yourselves, assume many roles, play at this sex and that, be children so as to afford your husband the passing great delight of whipping you and, be sure of it, treat

him thus thoughtfully and comprehendingly and he will take little heed of anything else."

"Ah Noirceuil, methinks there is gallantry lacking in you," quoth Saint-Fond, somewhat forcefully.

Noirceuil grimaced, "Eh, so I am. That situation will be altered before long."

"But what's this?" cried the mischievous D'Albert, casting a look of feigned surprise at Noirceuil's wife.

"We are due to be separated."

"Due to be separated! How dreadful," said Saint-Fond, greatly aroused.

"Have they not lasted long enough?"

"Very well then," Saint-Fond replied, "if you really intend to leave your wife, I'll take her—I've always thought very highly of her, of her gentleness, of the humane quality about her . . . kiss me, bitch!"

She was weeping from the pain Saint-Fond had been inflicting on her for a good quarter of an hour; they were of her sighs the libertine paused to drink, her tears he licked away before resuming: "Bless me, Noirceuil, to separate from so lovely a wife"—and he bit her—"so sensitive a wife"—and he pinched her—"why, my dear Noirceuil, it's sheer murder."

"You know," said D'Albert, "between the two of us I believe that's exactly what Noirceuil has in mind, a murder."

"How ghastly!" Saint-Fond exclaimed!

"And what would you have me do, pray tell?" Noirceuil asked.

"Meditate," said the Minister. "You'll hold the candle, you'll meditate, you'll plot."

We did not return to table, but everybody continued to drink there where he lay; 'tis very agreeable, this, and you are much quicker drunk that way. Alcohol began to have its effect almost at once, the women began to tremble; blazing glances were bent upon them, and I noticed that when they were spoken to the terms employed were threatening as well as foul. However, two facts were readily to be perceived: firstly, that the storm then gathering would pass me by, and that Mme. de Noirceuil was to bear the brunt of its fury; I dismissed my fears.

Shunted out of Saint-Fand's hands into those of her husband and from his into D'Albert's, the unhappy lady was in sorry straits already.

And now Saint-Fond, who was becoming giddy, ventured an atrocity: the rogue caught up a candle, waved it beneath the lady's nose for a moment or two, then burnt her eyelashes.

Greatly moved by this dramatic spectacle, I egged the actors on and induced them to essay another stunt. Upon my recommendation milady was drenched with brandy; for a brief instant she resembled a living torch, and when the blue flames died out, lo! it was not a pretty sight to behold: from head to toe one great burn covered her body. My idea had been a great success; there is no imagining how I was praised for having conceived it.

"And now what shall we do to her?" Saint-Fond asks.

"There are yet a thousand tortures she could be made to undergo," I reply, "one more piquant than the other." And I am about to suggest a few when Noirceuil approaches us and points out to Saint-Fond that it might be wiser to have her swallow the dose immediately lest from exhaustion she lack strength enough to enable us to appreciate and enjoy the effects of the poison. D'Albert's opinion is consulted, he agrees with Noirceuil most emphatically; the lady is untied and turned over to me.

"Poor wretch," I say to her after having introduced the powder into a glass of Alicante, "drink this, it will refresh you. It will improve your spirits. You'll see."

"You are going to die," he informs her; "you are, I suppose, reconciled to the fact?"

"I am confident," D'Albert remarks, "that madame is sensible enough to realize that when a wife has lost her husband's affection and esteem, when she no longer but wearies and is offensive to him, the simplest course open to her is to bow gracefully out of the picture."

"Oh yes! Oh yes!" the unlucky woman shrieks, "I ask only to die, kill me, that is my one request! In the name of heaven, be quick!"

"The death you crave, is already brewing in your guts," quoth Noirceuil. "Juliette did the thing. Such is her attachment to you she would never have forgiven us

had we deprived her of the joy of administering the *coup de grâce.*"

"Come, we are proceeding in a too disorderly fashion," said Noirceuil, seeing, from his wife's contortions, now begun in earnest, that she merited closer watching.

Howbeit, Noirceuil, stung, insulted, wishes to have his revenge; he is in the midst of devising fresh torments, but Noirceuil stays his hand, explaining to his friend that anything further done to the victim now must only detract from the pleasure of beholding the action of the venom.

"In any case," Saint-Fond said to Noirceuil, "I intend to honor our agreement; you have sacrificed your wife, you shall have another: my daughter is yours. As I was saying, my daughter is yours, gentle friend; and may heaven bless this occasion on which I acquire a most amiable son-in-law and the assurance of not being betrayed by the woman who supplies me with these poisons."

Here Noirceuil leant towards Saint-Fond and whispered what guessed was a question in his ear; the latter nodded affirmatively. The Minister then turned in my direction: "Juliette," said he, "you will come to see me tomorrow, I will more thoroughly discuss with you what I have only touched upon today. Remarrying, Noirceuil may dispense with your presence in his house; I propose to establish you in mine; and I trust that the reputation dwelling in my proximity will confer upon you, the money and the comforts I design to shower upon you, will prove ample compensation for the loss you are about to incur."

"My lord," said I, "most gratefully I accept all you deign to offer me, but I must tell you, since I cannot hide the fact, that I love Noirceuil: I do not relish the prospect of losing him."

"Nor shall you lose me, my child, we shall see one another frequently," was the reply of Saint-Fond's intimate friend and son-in-law to be, "we shall spend the better hours of our lives together."

"So be it," I said, "under those circumstances there is nothing I am not willing to consent to."

To the youths and whores the drastic and certain con-

sequences of the slightest indiscretion on their part were made abundantly clear; much impressed, they swore never to speak a word of what had passed that evening; Mme. Noirceuil's remains were buried in the garden; and those of the company bade one another farewell.

An unforeseen contingency was to delay Noirceuil's marriage and the realization of the Minister's schemes as well; nor when I went to see him the next day towards noon, was he there to greet me. The King, singularly content with Saint-Fond, and trusting him unreservedly, had summoned him that same morning, confided a secret mission to him, and Saint-Fond took his departure from the city immediately; later, upon his return, he was awarded the *cordon bleu,* and an annuity of one hundred thousand crowns.

In letters Noirceuil received from the Minister during his absence, I was enjoined to locate a house and to array it splendidly. And so, as soon as I was in command of the necessary funds, I rented a magnificent mansion on the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré; purchased four horses, two charming carriages; hired three lackeys, strapping tall fellows and very handsome; found a cook, two scullions, a housekeeper, a reader, three chambermaids, a hairdresser, two downstairs maids and a pair of coachmen; I acquired quantities of the finest in furnishings, and the day the Minister came back to Paris I betook myself to his home. I had just attained my seventeenth year, and I think I can say that for looks I compared very satisfactorily with the prettiest women in the capital; my figure was like unto that of the Goddess of Love, and art heightened what was mine of natural beauty. The contents of my wardrobe were worth well above one hundred thousand francs, a hundred thousand crowns was the value of the jewelries and diamonds I wore. Wherever I went every door was open to me; and that day the Minister's domestics bowed low. He was awaiting me, he was alone. I began by mentioning the tokens of royal esteem which had been showered upon him, my congratulations were of the sincerest, and I besought leave to kiss his hand; he accorded it provided I kneel while doing so; familiar with the dimensions of his pride, his arrogance, I catered to them and adjusted my behavior

to his wishes: it is by base flattery and abjectness the courtesan, like the courtier, buys the right to be insolent to everybody else.

Quoth he: "Madame, you see me in the hour of my glory; the King has dealt largely with me, and I daresay according to my deserts; my position has never been so solid nor my fortune so great. If, as I propose to do, I make you the beneficiary of some small part of His Majesty's bounty, it shall be upon the obvious conditions; in view of the projects we have executed jointly, I believe I can rely upon you, you have acquired my total confidence. But before I descend to particulars, kindly look at these two keys, madame. This first one opens the vault where is stored all the gold due to be yours if you serve me well; and this other is to the Bastille: in it there is a vacant cell, it is reserved for your lifelong occupancy should you fail of obedience or discretion."

"Confronted by such alternatives, one of doom, the other of glittering prosperity—I hardly need indicate which of the two I elect unhesitatingly. So place your whole trust in her who shall be absolutely your slave, and put away all doubts of her loyalty."

"You will have the charge of two important functions, madame. Be seated please, and heed me." Not thinking what I was about, I was taking an armchair when Saint-Fond gestured me toward an ordinary straight-backed chair; he cut me short in the middle of my profuse apology, and continued in this wise:

"The post I hold, and in which it is my aim to remain yet a good while, for it is a rewarding one. I am sometimes obliged to kill whether because of political reasons or simply to divert suspicion away from myself. Depending upon the specific case, the envenoming will be accomplished either here in Paris, at your home or at mine, or in the provinces, or, again, abroad.

"Now as to the second of your functions—in all likelihood the more arduous of the two; it will also prove the more lucrative, however. Endowed with a very powerful imagination, everyday pleasures meaning nothing to me anymore, Nature having given me a very fiery temperament, eminently cruel tastes and where means are

concerned all that is needed to satisfy these my furious passions, I shall, whether at your residence or at Noirceuil's or at the home of some one or other of my friends, sup in the libertine manner twice a week."

Seeing that Saint-Fond was waiting for my response, I said, "My lord, what I have revealed to you so far of my character must, I should think, be sufficient proof that I cannot possibly fail you; my self-interest and tastes are your guarantee of my good faith. Yes my lord, it is very true, Nature gave me the same passions she gave you . . . the same cast of mind too; and he who indulges in these things out of love of them will surely serve you better than he who obeys in order to please you rather than himself: the bond of friendship, a similarity of taste: such, be sure of it, such are the ties that most powerfully bind a woman like me."

"As regards friendship, bah! refrain from alluding to it, Juliette," the Minister said very sharply; "I hold that sentiment as empty, as illusory as love. Whatever originates in the heart is false; for my part, I believe in the senses alone, I believe alone in the carnal habits and appetites . . . in self-seeking, in self-interest. Aye, self-interest, of all possible bonds, shall always be the one in which I shall place the greatest faith; and I would therefore that the arrangements I am going to conclude with you be overwhelmingly to your personal advantage.

"I am quite as aware as you, Juliette, that with such a slender revenue you could not hope to provide for the two weekly suppers I shall require, nor dream of maintaining the house I ordered you to take; hence, I shall give you a million to defray the cost of those suppers; but bear it well in mind that they are to be of unparalleled magnificence, the most exquisite meats, the rarest wines, the most extraordinary fowl and fruits will be served at them all times, and immense quantity must be joined to the finest in quality: even if we were only two to dine, fifty courses would obviously be too few. You will have twenty thousand francs apiece for each member of the orgies you create, and that is not overmuch in view of the standards they shall have to meet. You will be alloted a further thirty thousand francs gratuity for every ministerial subject; there will be

roughly fifty of these each year, this article thus coming to some fifteen hundred thousand francs annually, to which I am adding a monthly twenty thousand francs for your appointments. Unless I have erred in my computations, this, madame, totals to a yearly six million seven hundred ninety thousand francs; we shall throw in two hundred ten thousand more for your pocket-money, supplementary charges and divers trifles, so rounding the sum out to an even seven milion whereof, if you like, you may bank fifty thousand, yours by contract. Will this do, Juliette?"

Suppressing all outward signs of a tremendous elation, for greater yet was the greed consuming me, I was silent a moment, pursing my lips and seeming to take counsel with myself; it seemed to me altogether possible, nay, likely, that the huge expenses I was going to have to incur would largely exceed the resources at my disposal; and that, besides . . .

"You need say no more," the Minister interrupted; "you have spoken in an idiom I apprehend perfectly, ably served. Stint on nothing, madame, and you will have ten millions a year; we have no reason to be niggardly."

"Adorable man," I cried, "your philosophy positively inflames me. A moment ago you detected the motive of selfishness in me; it is now doubled by that of taste, believe me, and be persuaded also, that my zeal in your service shall be owing a thousand times more to worship of such pleasures than to any other cause."

"Ah. That reminds me, madame, of the patents of impunity D'Albert promised you when last we supped together. I have the papers here, they arrived this morning; it was I requested them of the Chancellor, not D'Albert—whose habitual forgetfulness, you understand, goes with his post."

This multitude of favorable developments, this windfall, the prospects opened up to me—I was as though spellbound, and quite speechless. Saint-Fond brought me forth out of my trance when he drew me to him and, asking, "How long shall it be ere we begin, Juliette?" kissed me and ran his hand down my behind.

"My lord," said I, "I must have three weeks at least to ready all the organization."

"Three weeks then. Today is the first of the month, Juliette. I shall sup at your residence on the twenty-second, at seven."

"There is something else, my lord," I went on. "You have deigned to describe your tastes to me; I may perhaps tell you something of mine. This document allows me to steal to my heart's desire; pray furnish me with the wherewithal to revenge myself against an eventual enemy."

"Come with me," said Saint-Fond.

We entered the office of a clerk.

"My good sir," quoth the Minister, "your attention please. Look closely at this young lady; remember her. I order you to sign and to deliver to her, upon her simple request, as many *lettres de cachet* as she wishes, whenever, or for whatever places of detention she chooses."

We returned into the chamber we had formerly been in. "There, you are prettily equipped," said the Minister, "now show what you can do. Burn, trample, hack away, all France is yours; and whatsoever you do, regardless of its magnitude, its gravity, perpetrate it intrepidly, for fear you need not, you shall get away scot-free, you have my word. You shall have more."

My friends, I shall not attempt to describe the impact these promises, these prospects had upon me.

It is well nigh incredible, said I to myself. From the outset blessed by Nature with an imagination tending to extravagance, here am I now, rich enough to satisfy my every whim, to achieve my every ambition, strong enough to defy any retaliation. No; there are no inward joys comparable to this knowledge that I am powerful and hence free.

"So now, madame, let us seal the bargain," said the Minister. "Here's a little gift for you, a mere bauble," he went on, handing me a casket where there were five thousand *louis* in gold, and twice that in gems and jewelry; "take it along, and don't forget the box of poisons."

Then he led me into a secret room where the furnishings were both sumptuous and bizarre.

"Henceforth upon entering this place, and while you are here, your condition will be that of a common whore; and at all other times you will be one of the greatest ladies in the kingdom."

"Wherever I am, my lord, I shall be your slave, your admirer eternally, and the very soul of your most exquisite pleasures."

I undressed. Thrilled at having found a suitable accomplice at last, Saint-Fond performed horrors. Of his ways I have told you something, I now discovered more; leaving his house I might feel as though I had not my peer in all the world, but when I was in his company, he degraded me unutterably; when it was a question of lust, he was verily the filthiest man that can be conceived, the most despotical, the cruellest.

He made me spit on his *cordon bleu*.

"I would have you see, Juliette, that such rags and ribbons, designed to dazzle fools, do not overawe a philosopher."

"But a short moment ago, you obliged me to kiss it?"

"True enough, but just as I pride myself on what these little fripperies represent, so it also flatters my pride prodigiously to profane them. All this—'tis just a quirk in me such as makes sense only to libertines of my species."

He showed me a portrait of his daughter, scarcely fourteen years old, and as lovely a creature as one could behold; I begged him to include her at one of our foregatherings.

"She is not here," he told me; "were she you'd have already seen her in our midst."

"I take it you are not sending her to Noirceuil without having enjoyed her first?"

"That is quite correct," he replied; "I would be heartbroken to allow someone else to pluck such delicious first fruits."

"So you have ceased to love her?"

"Love her? Juliette, I love nothing, nobody, none of us libertines loves anything at all. I am giving her to Noirceuil, whom she heats exceedingly—it is a matter of mutual convenience, that's all."

"But when Noirceuil tires of her?"

"Why, you know the usual fate of his wives; in all likelihood I shall participate in the ceremony myself. I have in others; they are always stimulating. They are always worthwhile. That's the sort of thing I like . . ."

"My lord," said I, "it seems to me that if I were in your position, I'd be tempted to abuse my authority at certain moments."

"It sometimes happens."

"O my lord," I began. Then: "Let's massacre some innocents, shall we? The idea makes my brain whirl."

"One moment," said he, removing a sheet of paper from his pocket and unfolding it, "I have but to put my signature to that, and a very attractive person is tortured tomorrow. She is in prison at the moment; I issued the warrant upon the request of her family. Their single grievance is that she prefers women to men. I have seen her; she is charming; I amused myself with her the other day, and since then I have been so anxious lest she blab, that my one thought, or rather desire, has been to get rid of her."

"Ah my lord, she'll talk if given the chance, she'll talk, your fears are only too well founded; so long as that girl is alive, you will be in constant danger. Therefore, and if I implore you to do so, it is because your safety depends on it, sign that paper." And taking it from his hand. "There is a quill on that desk, and an inkhorn."

He signed his name.

"I am quite willing to carry it to the clerk myself," I said.

"As you like," said he. He rang. "Pray do not be alarmed," he went on, "it is a ritual." And the next moment a pretty youth appeared in the doorway.

"Kindly kneel, Juliette, this young man is to bestow three blows of a cane upon your shoulders, the traces will last only a few days."

In the meantime, I knelt down; the youth picks up his cane and so smart were the three cuts he gave me the marks showed for the space of a fortnight. Saint-Fond watched with lewd curiosity; then he came up and examined the stripes on my skin, grumbled about their faintness.

The mysterious youth withdrew. It was not until long afterward that an event I will relate in due course shed light on his character and identity.

Saint-Fond escorted me out of the boudoir; and once we had left it, reassumed his former thoughtful air.

"Remember," said he, "that our schedule calls for operations to begin three weeks from today. Very well. Libertinage, crime, discretion, Juliette, and your welfare is assured. Adieu."

The very first thing I did was examine the order whereof I was the bearer. Great heavens, what was my amazement to discover that here in black and white were instructions to the supervisor of the convent-prison in question, secretly to poison—who? None other than Sainte-Elme, that charming girl I had fairly worshipped during my sojourn at Panthémont. Another person would perhaps have torn up that baneful piece of paper; not I. For I was too far advanced in my criminal career to quail; I did not even pause, no, nor waver for an instant, with determined step I betake myself to Sainte-Pélagie where Sainte-Elme had been languishing three long months behind bars; I transmit the order into the hands of the head warden, ask to see the culprit; I interrogate her, she declares the Minister's offered to arrange her liberation in return for her favors, and that she did with him all that it is possible for a woman to do.

"I have with me the document that will put an end to your misery," said I, kissing her.

Sainte-Elme thanks me, repays my caresses tenfold. . . . The following day she was dead.

"Faith," said I to myself upon learning of the outcome of my scurvy deed, "I can do better than that. I was made for great things. I feel it."

And setting myself promptly to work preparing the stage for the scenes Saint-Fond was to enact, within the space of three weeks I was, as I had promised, able to provide the first of his suppers.

Six excellent procuresses I had taken into my employ supplied me, for my début, three young sisters spirited away from a pious retreat in Meaux, twelve, thirteen and fourteen years of age, and positively celestial in face and figure.

That first evening the Minister appeared in the company of a man in his sixties. Upon arriving, he encloseted himself for several minutes with me, inspected my shoulders, and appeared irritated at finding no traces left of the stripes he had had inflicted upon me at our last get-together. Scarcely did he touch me; but he advised the greatest respect and the profoundest submissiveness in my behavior toward the individual who had come with him, he being one of the foremost personages at the Court. The latter entered the room directly Saint-Fond left it. Forewarned by my lover, I turned and exhibited myself. He approached, a spyglass in his hand. He walked around in front of me; it was a severe and unlovely visage I looked into.

"Put your tongue in my mouth."

I did so. Whereupon he said: "Belch or be bitten."

But seeing that I couldn't obey, I backed away quickly enough to avoid the trap. The old rascal flies into a fury, he catches up a bundle of withes and belabors me for a quarter of an hour; then he stops and walks round to in front of me again.

"You're soon to have at your disposal," said I, "three delicious objects whom you can torment in whatever way you like."

"Aye, but you are attractive . . ." said he, fondling me.

So saying, he rids himself of his clothing and upon the mantel lays a diamond-studded timepiece, a gold snuffbox, his purse overflowing two hundred *louis,* and two superb rings.

"Let's have another try now."

But when I emit a loud scream and seem like to faint away at his advances, confused and aflutter and dreading lest by using his mistress somewhat too roughly he give offense to the Minister, the nobleman scurries from the room, hoping his departure will quieten me. I fling his clothes into an adjoining chamber, pounce upon his valuables and hurriedly rejoin Saint-Fond who enquires of me, "Is there anything amiss?"

"Nothing at all," say I, "but from being in too great haste fetching His Highness' clothes I let the door to my boudoir shut to, the key is inside and these English locks

—there's no opening them. But never mind; monsieur has his shirt and breeches here, we can defer the interview he desires until some later time."

And I draw my two guests out into the garden, where everything has been put in readiness to receive them; the old nobleman forgets his belongings, dons the costume I tender him, and is mindful only of the pleasures yet to come.

The weather that evening was faultless, we were beneath a bower of roses with lilac bushes all around us; a multitude of candles furnished the light, our seats were three thrones supported on artificial clouds whence came the scent of the most delicious perfumes; in the center of the table was a very mountain of the rarest flowers, set amongst which were the jade and porcelain cups and plates we were to drink from and dine off; the service was of gold. No sooner had we taken our places than the bower opened overhead and before our eyes were descended a fiery cloud: upon it, the Three Furies and, prisoned in the coils of their serpents, the three victims destined to be used at this feast. The Furies alighted from their aerial car, then stood by in readiness. No previously established program decided the order of that meal, it was to shape itself according to the wishes of my guests; anything you happened to wish for you simply demanded, and the Furies brought it to you instantly. Above eighty widely varying dishes were called for, every one is served up in trice; ten kinds of wine are requested, all ten flow, everything is there in plenty, in profusion.

" 'Tis nicely done," my lover remarked. "I trust Your Grace is satisfied with my directress' initial effort?"

"Enchanted," answered the sexagenarian, his head reeling from the abundance of food and spirits, and his tongue thick already. "Indeed, Saint-Fond, I envy you your divine Juliette—I have never clapped eyes on a fairer maid."

"Nor have I," the Minister owned; "but I suggest we leave her be for a while, and concern ourselves with our Furies who, if I'm not greatly mistaken, are superbly fleshed also."

And at that hint, the three goddesses, impersonated

by the three loveliest girls my purveyors had been able to locate for me after ransacking the whole of Paris, immediately bared themselves to the two libertines, who kissed them with much relish, and complete abandon.

"My good Saint-Fond," the prince stuttered, "shall we have ourselves flogged by these Furies?"

"With rose branches," Saint-Fond proposed.

Lo! there are our bawds' backsides exposed, being cruelly lashed now by garlands of flowers, now by the Furies' snakes.

Some groans were heard at this point; they had been uttered by the three naked girls.

"Unloose them," said Saint-Fond, "and bring them hither."

The Furies detached them and led them before my two guests; and since no female can combine grace and beauty in higher degree, I leave you to imagine to what lecherous attentions they were subjected straightway.

"Juliette," said the Minister, transported, "you are a charming and able creature; plainly, you have the touch of a master, these results authorize the statement. . . . Come, let's lose ourselves amongst these arbors, amidst these flowers, come, in shadow and silence let us give ourselves up to all our brains may dictate . . ."

A fortnight had passed when Noirceuil and I chatted privately. "Your lover anticipated your objection—indeed, he would have been disappointed had you made none. 'I want her to be paid, and paid according to her desires'—often has he repeated that to me."

"Saint-Fond seems to know me very well," was my reply; "I have a liking for money, I don't hide the fact from myself, neither do I from you. But I shall never ask him for more than is necessary. These six hundred thousand francs will go into carrying out the project; I want six hundred thousand more for myself the day the old man expires."

"You'll have them, never fear. O Juliette, what a splendid situation is yours! Do nothing to spoil it, do everything to deserve it, enjoy it, and if you know how to conduct yourself intelligently, you'll soon be the

wealthiest woman in Europe; I have given you a marvelous friend."

"Out of respect for your principles, Noirceuil, I refrain from thanking you; arranging this liaison pleased you, you gain therefrom as well, it flatters you to have among your intimate acquaintances a woman whose social position, riches and name have already started to eclipse those of the court princesses. . . . I'd be ashamed to be at the Opera dressed as the Princesse de Nemours was yesterday evening; not a soul so much as glanced at her. Everybody's eyes were upon me."

"And you are relishing all this, Juliette?"

"Infinitely, my dear. To begin with, I am rolling in gold, which, for me, is the foremost of enjoyable things."

Next we entered into a few details touching the parties I gave for the Minister.

"I must tell you," said Noirceuil, "that of late there are signs you are relaxing your efforts; Saint-Fond has noticed it. There were fewer than fifty dishes at the last supper; you are of course aware that only by eating well can one hope to love copiously," he continued. Gluttony sorts wonderfully well with all the tastes it has pleased Nature to instill in us; and experience shows the heart never so staunch as after one has sumptuously dined. I would say a word, too, about the choice of girls. Although those you place before us are without doubt very pretty, Saint-Fond feels that more research would improve the selection. I cannot but attempt to impress upon you the care that must be taken in this matter. We require that the game furnished us not only be of the finest breed, but that in addition it possess all those qualities, moral as well as physical, which make bagging it interesting."

For answer to this, I outlined the excellent measures I was taking: instead of six, now I had two dozen women working round the clock, and under them they had an equal number of subalterns combing the provinces; I was the kingpin of the entire mechanism; and I was putting forward a great effort.

"Before contracting for an object," Noirceuil recommended, "even if it involve a thirty leagues journey, make it: there is no substitute for personal inspection;

and never accept anything but what meets with your total approval."

"All very well," said I, "but that formula is not always so easy to follow. The object is frequently kidnapped before I have had a description of it."

"Why then," Noirceuil rejoined, "kidnap twenty to obtain a yield of five."

"But what am I to do with the rejects?"

"Whatever you wish: sport with them yourself, sell them to your friends, to procuresses, to panders. With the apparatus you will have built up you should be able to traffic on a broad scale and, it would seem to me, even create a virtual monopoly; at any rate, there ought to be a good hundred thousand a year in this for you."

"True, if Saint-Fond paid me for every object acquired. As things stand, he only remits for three per supper."

"I think I can induce him to pay for the lot."

"He'll be far better served if he does. Now Noirceuil," I said, "there are some other matters I should like to discuss, and they relate to me. You know the kind of mind I have: I need hardly tell you that with all these means for mischief-making, I indulge very heavily in it; the ideas which occur to me, the things I imagine are beyond description—but, my friend, I require your advice. Don't you suppose that, ultimately, my behavior may make Saint-Fond jealous?"

"Never," Noirceuil answered at once. "Saint-Fond is an exceedingly reasonable person, as such he senses you cannot attain self-expression save through much wrongdoing; the idea itself amuses him, and just the other day he was telling me that he was less afraid Juliette might hold herself in check than that she might be disinclined to make the most of her opportunities."

"Oh, in that case, let him be easy; you may assure the Minister that it is seldom one finds a person with a more pronounced taste for every sort of vice."

"I have now and then heard it asked," said Noirceuil, "whether the jealousy she inspires speaks in favor of or against a woman, and I have always thought the question odd: for my part it has from the beginning been obvious to me that the impulse leading to this mania being purely personal, women assuredly have nothing to gain

from the tumult it produces in their lovers' breasts. It is not by any means fondness for a woman that brings on jealousy; it is dread of the humiliation her change of heart would cause one; and to prove there is nothing but sheer egoism in and behind this passion, I have simply to remind you that no lover, if he be of good faith, and sincere, will deny he would prefer to see his mistress dead than unfaithful. Hence, it is rather her fickleness than the loss of her afflicts us, and 'tis hence our own selves we are thinking of when the event occurs. It is not possible, you say, to lie with a woman without loving her? And it is not possible to love her without lying with her? But why must you embroil the heart in something where it is exclusively the body that acts? They are two very different needs, so it seems to me. Araminthe has the world's most beautiful figure, her face is endearing with big brown sultry eyes. Why, pray tell, need anything heartfelt accompany the act whereby I take this creature's body? It does appear to me once again, that loving and enjoying are distinct and separate affairs, and that not only is it unnecessary to love in order to enjoy, but that it suffices to enjoy in order not to love. To complete my comparison: Belinda is ugly, she's forty-two, not one hint of the gracious anywhere about her person, not a single attractive feature, no, she's a slug, grossly ill-favored. But Belinda is clever, she has wit, a delicious character, a million things which mate nicely with my sentiments and tastes; I'd have no desire to bed with Belinda, but I'd be wild about her conversation nonetheless. I'd intensely desire to have Araminthe, but I'd cordially detest her directly the fever of desire was abated, because in her I have found a body only, and none of the moral qualities which could win her a place in my heart. All this however is quite irrelevant to the present case; in Saint-Fond's tolerant attitude toward the infidelities you commit there is an element of libertine sentiment for which none of the foregoing provides an adequate explanation. The idea of you lying in another's arms entrances Saint-Fond, he himself puts you there, you'll multiply his pleasures as proportionally you augment the size and number of your own, and Saint-Fond will never cherish

you so much as when you do to the utmost that which would earn you the hatred of a clod."

"What you tell me is reassuring," said I; "Saint-Fond will love my tastes, my mind, my character, and shan't be at all jealous of my person? Very great is my relief to hear you say it, for, I confess to you, continence would be impossible for me, my temperament requires satisfaction, my thirst requires to be slaked at all costs; hot-blooded as I am, energetic and imaginative as you know me to be, with this colossal wealth at my command, how ever could I resist passions aroused by everything, inflamed continually?"

"Surrender to them, Juliette, surrender to them, you cannot do more, you should not do less; but in your dealings with the public at large, I would urge you to be somewhat the hypocrite. Remember that in this world hypocrisy is an indispensable vice for him who has the fortune of possessing all the others; with art and deceit, one succeeds at anything, for it isn't your virtue society needs, it is simply a pretext for supposing you virtuous. In addition, hypocrisy, teaching one craft and guile, facilitates countless crimes; your disinterested air invites trust, the adversary lowers his guard, and the less you give him to suspect you are armed with one, the easier it is to drive home the dagger. This covert and mysterious manner of thus satisfying the passions increases a thousandfold the enjoyment you derive from them. Cynicism has its piquancy, I am aware of it, but it does not lure into your net, it does not assure you victims as certainly as hypocrisy does.

"I know a widow," Noirceuil said. "She is thirty, lovely, nay, beautiful, criminal to the core, arrayed with all the qualities you want, and who will be of invaluable aid to you in your chosen career. She can replace me as your tutor; for, you realize, separated as we are, I can no longer attend to your needs with the same ardor as before: Madame de Clairwil, that is the name of the person I have in mind, and she is a millionaire, knows everybody worth knowing, everything that can possibly be known, and I am convinced she will agree to take you under her wing."

"Charming Noirceuil, you are too good; but there's yet more to it, my friend. I'd like to share my knowledge with another; I keenly sense my need of instruction, I no less keenly desire to educate someone: I must have a teacher, yes, and I must have a pupil too."

"Of course. My fiancée?"

"What!" I cried enthusiastically, "would you entrust me with Alexandrine's education?"

"Could I put her in better hands? I'd be delighted to have you take charge of her. Moreover, it is Saint-Fond's wish that she keep the most intimate company with you."

"And what is causing the delay in this marriage?"

"I am in mourning for my last wife, you know."

"Do you defer to conventional usages?"

"Occasionally, for the sake of appearances; though it goes fearfully against the grain—"

"One further word, dear Noirceuil: you are very sure this woman you propose to introduce me to will not become my rival?"

"You are thinking of your position with Saint-Fond? Fear not. Saint-Fond knew her long before he met you, he still amuses himself with her; but Madame de Clairwil would not consent to undertake your functions, and, for his part, the Minister would not obtain anything like the same pleasure from having her exercise them."

"Ah," I exclaimed, "you are divine, both of you, and your generosity toward me will be very fully rewarded by my zeal in the service of your passions. Issue me orders, I shall be only too happy, always, to be the instrument of your debauches and the main accessory to your crimes."

I was not to see my lover again until after I executed the task he had assigned me; on the eve of the appointed day I was exhorted to be firm; and on the morrow the dear old gentleman appeared. Before we sat down at table I employed all my skill to mend his opinion of his son, and was quite taken aback to discover that, indeed, it would not be at all difficult to set things straight between them. Therefore I hastily shifted my tack. 'Tis not a reconciliation we want now, said I to myself; if that happens, I lose both the opportunity for the crime I am

in a perfect itch to commit, and the twelve hundred thousand francs promised me for bringing it off; let's cease negotiations and start to act. Administering the drug was childsplay; the old man collapses, he is trundled out, and two days later I learn to my considerable satisfaction that he is no more.

It was but an hour or so after he expired that his son arrived for one of his semi-weekly suppers at my house. Poor weather forced us to hold it indoors; and Noirceuil was the one other guest present. I'd readied three young girls prettier than you can imagine; a Paris ecole had supplied them to me at the price of a hundred thousand francs a head—I'd stopped bargaining ever since Saint-Fond had agreed to cover costs.

"These," said I, presenting them to the Minister, "will console you for the loss you have just sustained."

"It does not overly affect me, Juliette," said the Minister, kissing me, "I'd willingly send fifteen such blackguards to their death every day, and without an ace of compunction. My one regret is that he suffered so little; he was a most contemptible clown."

"But d'ye know," I said, "it wouldn't have taken much to change his attitude?"

And, as if eager to forget, the libertine fell immediately to the job, my three maids were assessed. There was nothing the fiercest critic could find fault with: size, shape, birth, mint condition, youth, looks, they were all there; but I noticed that neither of the two friends were stiffening in the least, and satiety is not easy to please: 'twas apparent they were not content, but did not, however, dare complain.

"Speak up," said I, "if these objects don't satisfy you, you must tell me what you want. For, you must admit, I cannot hope to guess what it would be that outdoes this."

"No," sighed Saint-Fond, who was having himself handled by two of the girls, whose efforts were proving fruitless, "there's no one to blame unless it's Noirceuil and myself."

"Perhaps," I suggested, "if you were to recount your feats, you might, from the telling, rediscover the strength to commit fresh infamies."

"We can at least try," said Noirceuil.

"Well then, off with the clothes," said Saint-Fond, "you too, Juliette, undress yourself, and listen to us."

Then 'twas supper-time, I alone was invited to partake of the feast, but nude; the girls lay scattered about the table, light was provided by the candles.

"Noirceuil," said Saint-Fond, "prithee explain to us, manipulating your metaphysics prettily as you are wont to do, prithee explain to us, how 'tis possible we arrive at pleasure, in the one case through the sight of others enduring pain, and in the other, through suffering pain ourselves."

"Pay me close heed," said Noirceuil, "I'll give you the thing detailed and demonstrated.

" 'Pain,' logically defined, 'is nothing other than a sentiment of hostility in the soul towards the body it animates, which it signifies through certain movements that conflict with the body's physical organization.' So says Nicole, who perceived in man an ethereal substance, which he called soul, and which he differentiated from the material substance we call body. I, however, who will have none of this frivolous stuff and who consider man as something on the order of an absolutely material plant, I shall simply say, that pain is the consequence of a defective relationship between objects foreign to us and the organic molecules composing us; instead of composing harmoniously with those that make up our neural fluids, as they do in the commotion of pleasure, the atoms emanating from these foreign objects strike them crookedly, sting them, repulse them, and never fuse with them. Still, though the effects are negative, they are effects nonetheless, and whether it be pleasure or pain brewing in us, you will always have a certain impact upon the neural fluids. What prevents me from becoming accustomed, through habit, to being no less suitably agitated by the atoms that repel, than by the others that blend? Weary of the effects that only produce a simple sensation, why should I not become accustomed to receiving the same pleasure from those that produce a *poignant* sensation? Both categories of shock are sustained in the same place; the only difference between them is that one is violent and the other mild; but from the standpoint

of the blasé individual, is not the first greatly to be preferred to the second? Is there any thing commoner than to see, on the one hand, people who have accustomed their palates to a pleasurable irritation, and, next to them, others who couldn't put up with that irritation for an instant? "Yes, my friends," Noirceuil went on, "it is, you may be sure, impossible for any person who finds authentic pleasure in lewd and voluptuous activities ever really to combine their practice with that of delicacy, which unto these delights is naught but the very kiss of death, and which is based upon the premise that joy is to be shared, a premise no one who intends seriously to enjoy himself can ever accept: shared, all enjoyment becomes dilute, the wine becomes watered. The truth is generally recognized: encourage or allow the object which serves for your pleasure to take enjoyment therein, and straightway you discover that it is at your expense; there is no more selfish passion than lust; none that is severer in its demands; 'tis with yourself you must be solely concerned, and as for the object that serves you, it must always be considered as some sort of victim, destined to that passion's fury. Do not all passions require victims?"

We rose from table. I can't say just why, but that evening Noirceuil seemed more than usually enamored of me; he could not leave off kissing me, toying with me, praising me. All this heated me prodigiously, and my behavior must have appeared frightfully whorish to my friends. I proposed the idea of having one of my valets; but Saint-Fond, reeling with wine and aboil with ferocity, objected, saying that he'd have nothing brought in from the outside unless it was a brace of tigers, and that since there was fresh meat available, it ought to be devoured before it spoiled.

We resumed our drinking.

Invaded by new desires, the libertines called for men; my lackeys were summoned, they were the whole night long laboring with Saint-Fond and Noirceuil and for all that weren't able to excite those gentlemen whose verbal outbursts, however, were astonishing; and it was in the course of that séance I recognized, more clearly than ever before, how certain it was these monsters

were as cruel upon cold principle as in the greatest heat of passion.

A month after this adventure, Noirceuil introduced me to the woman he wished to have become my soulmate. As his marriage to Alexandrine had been postponed yet again, this time owing to Saint-Fond's bereavement, and because I think best not to describe that charming girl before I reach the appropriate point in my story—the point, that is, at which she came into my full possession—we'll now turn our attentions to Madame de Clairwil and the arrangements I made with that unusual person to cement our liaison.

Representing her to me, Noirceuil had been authorized in his use of superlatives. Madame de Clairwil was tall, splendidly proportioned; her glance, always keen, was often too fiery to withstand; but her eyes, large, dark, were more imposing than pleasing, and in general the aspect of this woman was more majestic than agreeable: her mouth somewhat rounded, was fresh, her lips sensual, her hair, jet-black, fell to the height of her knees; her nose was modeled to perfection, her brow was regal, rich were the lines of her bust, wonderfully smooth was her skin, though 'twas not untinged a little with sallowness, her flesh was ripe but firm; in short, this was the figure of Minerva adorned with Venus' amenities. Nevertheless, whether because I was the younger, or because my physiognomy had in grace what hers had in nobility, men invariably found me the more pleasing. Mme. de Clairwil astonished, I was content to beguile; she compelled men's admiration, I seduced them.

To these imperious looks Mme. de Clairwil joined a very lofty intelligence; she was exceptionally knowledgeable, I have never known her peer for an enemy to prejudices . . . which she had rooted out of herself while yet a child; and I have never known a woman to carry philosophy so far. As well, she had numerous talents: her command of English and Italian was complete, she was a born actress, danced like Terpsichore, was an accomplished chemist, physicist, made verse prettily, drew nicely, was well read in history, had geography at her fingertips, was no mean musician, wrote like Sévigné, but went perhaps a trifle too far in her

witty sallies, the regular consequence being an insufferable overbearingness with those who failed to come up to her level, and almost no one ever did; she used to say that I was the one female in whom, until now, she had detected a trace of true intelligence.

This splendid personage had been five years a widow. She had never borne any children: to them she had an aversion which, in a woman, always denotes unfeelingness; one might fairly say that for lack of sensibility Mme. de Clairwil had not her equal. She indeed prided herself upon never having shed a tear, upon never having been touched in the least by the fate of the unlucky. "My soul is callous, it is impassive," said she, "I put any sentiment whatever at defiance to attain it, with the exception of pleasure. I am mistress of that soul's movements and affections, of its desires, of its impulsions; with me, everything is under the unchallenged control of mind; and there's worse yet," she continued, "for my mind is appalling. But I am not complaining, I cherish my vices, I abhor virtue."

With such a character, Mme. de Clairwil, one was swift to guess, might have adulators in good number, but very few were her friends; she no more believed in friendship than in benevolence, and no more in virtue than in gods. Along with all this went enormous wealth, a splendid house in Paris, an enchanting one in the country, luxuries of every kind, the age when a woman is at her peak, an iron constitution, faultless health.

At our very first meeting Mme. de Clairwil confided in me, giving evidence of a frankness I found startling in a woman who, as I have just done telling you, was so proudly persuaded of her superiority; but she was never aloof towards me, I must say it out of fairness to her.

"Noirceuil described you accurately," she said; "'tis evident we have similar minds, similar tastes; we seem made to live together, so let us join forces, we shall go far. But above all, let's banish all restraints, and from the start, they were invented for fools only."

Several days later, Clairwil, with whom I was already grown infatuated, came to supper. We were two and alone. It was then, at this second encounter, we poured out our hearts to one another, acknowledged our pecu-

liarities, detailed our sentiments. Oh, what a soul she had, that Clairwil! I believe that if vice itself could dwell in this world it would have chosen the depths of that perverse being for the seat of its empire.

In a moment of mutual confidence before we were to betake ourselves to table, Clairwil leaned close to me; we were indolently reclining in a nook paneled by mirrors, velvet-covered pillows supported our heaving flanks; the soft light seemed to beckon to love and to favor its pleasures.

"Let's undress," I suggested to my friend, "lewd debauch calls for nakedness—and, do you know, I've not the faintest idea how you are made, I wish to see everything, I must, I must."

"What an idea," Clairwil murmured, "it hints at your character, Juliette, I adore it; we'll do just whatever you like."

The sight of the beauties nature had lavished upon me began to inflame Clairwil; I feasted my eyes upon hers. Never has there been such a lovely figure, never such a bosom. . . . Those buttocks! 'Twas the ass of that Aphrodite the Greeks reverenced; and how deliciously it was cleft; at first letting me most obligingly have my way with her, proceeded next to pay back my caresses a hundredfold.

"Now don't fret, leave everything to me," she said.

"What skill! What consideration!" I exclaimed. "Ah Clairwil, you are like to be my undoing."

"Eh then?" quoth she, when I had returned somewhat to my senses, "I adore women; is it then any wonder that I am versed in the art of giving them pleasure? what else could you expect? I'm depraved, dear heart. Is it my fault if Nature gave me tastes that differ from the ordinary? I find nothing more unjust than a law that prescribes a mingling of the sexes in order to procure oneself a pure pleasure; and what sex is more apt than ours in doing unto each other that which we do singly to delight ourselves. Must we not, of necessity, be more successful in pleasing each other than that being, our complete opposite, who can offer us none but the joys at the farthest remove from those our sort of existence requires?"

"What, Clairwill, do you mean to say that you dislike men?"

"I use them because my temperament would have it so, but I scorn and detest them nonetheless; I'd not be adverse to destroying every last one of those by the mere sight of whom I have always felt myself debased."

"What pride—"

"It's a characteristic of mine, Juliette; that pride is coupled with frankness. I am plainspoken; it is a means to facilitate our early acquaintance."

"Cruelty is implied in what you say; if your desires were to be translated into actions—"

"If? But they very often are. My heart is hard, and I am far from believing sensitiveness preferable to the apathy I luckily enjoy.

"Sensibility, my dear, is the source of all virtues and likewise of all vices. It was sensibility brought Cartouche to the scaffold, just as it caused the name of Titus to be writ gilt-lettered gold in the annals of benevolence. Owing to excessive sensibility, we behave virtuously; owing to excessive sensibility we take joy in misbehaving; the individual lacking sensibility is an inert mass, equally incapable of good or evil, and who is human only insofar as he has the human shape. This purely physical sensibility depends upon the conformation of our organs, upon the delicacy of our sense, and more than all the rest, upon the nature of our nervous humours within which I locate all the affections of man in general. Everyone receives from Nature; and selfishness, i.e., the instinct of self-preservation, aids upbringing and habit to settle permanently upon this or that choice. But as the sort of education we are apt to receive unfailingly prepares us ill, and indeed misleads us, directly that education is over, with the inflammation produced in the electrical fluid by the impact of foreign objects, an operation we term the *effect of the passions* begins to determine our habitual bent for good or for evil. If, in that other case, foreign objects act in a forceful manner upon our organs, if they penetrate them violently, if they stir into brisk motion the neural fluid particles which circulate in the hollow of the nerves, then our sensibility is such as to dispose us to vice.

"If after you have done calculating you end by approving, as I am very sure you shall, the extinction of all sensibility in a pupil, then the first branch to lop off the tree is necessarily pity. And actually what is pity? A purely egotistical sentiment: seeing others beset by woe, we pity them because we fear lest that same woe befall us. Show me the man who, owing to his nature, is, exempt from all the ills that afflict humankind, and not only will that man have no pity whatever, he won't even know the meaning of the word.

"A further proof that this feeling is naught but sheer weakness and lack of courage is the particular frequency with which it is found in women and children, and its rarity in those individuals whose organs have acquired all suitable strength and vigor.

"There, Juliette, there they are, the principles that have led me to this tranquillity, this equanimity, to this stoicism which now enables me to do anything and to endure anything without batting an eyelash. Make haste to initiate yourself into these mysteries," continued that charming woman, as yet unaware of the point I had advanced to in these articles.

"O Clairwil, I can't imagine that with such attitudes you have impoverished yourself through *good works*."

"I am rich," that extraordinary woman replied, "so rich that I am not even sure how much I have."

"Adorable woman," I said to my friend, "knowing the position I hold in the Minister's entourage, as I think you must, you cannot doubt that my moral outlook as regards the subjects you have been discussing is not a great deal purer than yours."

"Certainly," said she, "I know all the services you render Saint-Fond; I have been his friend as well as Noirceuil's for ages—how could I help but be familiar with those two scoundrels' debauches? You collaborate in them, and that is laudable; were I needy I'd do the same, and I'd do it happily. But I also know, Juliette, that by laboring much in behalf of others you have, so far, labored little in your own; and with but two or three petty thefts to your credit you can still benefit from examples and lessons; so let me encourage you and steel

you to bigger undertakings, if indeed you really wish to be worthy of us."

"Ah," said I, "I am already much in your debt; pray continue to instruct me, and rest assured you will nowhere find a more attentive nor an apter student. I am in your hands, there is nothing I'll not attempt at your side, guided by your advice; and from now on my whole ambition shall be some day to surpass my teacher. But, my best beloved, we are already forgetful of our pleasures: I received divine ones from you, you've not yet given me a chance to reciprocate, and I am keenly impatient to instill into your soul some spark of the heavenly fire you lately caused to blaze in mine."

"Juliette, you are delicious, verily. But I am too old for you. Are you aware that I am thirty? Ordinary things have long since palled . . . to be moved ever so slightly, I must have recourse to refinements so coarse, episodes so potent—I require. . . . But enough: my habits will affright you, my transports will shock you, my exigencies will fatigue you . . ."

And then a brightness entered her eyes, a lewdness wetted her lips; she asked:

"Have you women in the house? Are they lascivious? Pretty or not, that doesn't matter, for I'll be aroused by you. But as for these creatures tolerably roguish, immodest, patient, vigorous, foul-mouthed creatures; and they need not bother to come into the room if they're wearing a stitch of clothing. How many such women can you provide me?"

"I have only four in my permanent hire," I answered, "four being enough for my emergency requirements."

"That's bloody few. You can't pretend to be poor. My dear, you ought to maintain at least twenty and change them all every week, furthermore. Ah, 'tis clear I'll have to teach you how to use the money you're swimming in. Are you miserly? Not that there's anything wrong with that. I idolize money, it excites me sexually. I find it quite natural that others have the same taste; but nevertheless I won't have you deprive yourself: only fools are unable to understand that one can be simultaneously niggardly and lavish, that one can love

wasteful squandering upon one's pleasures and refuse a farthing to charity. Well then. Send for your four women; and find some switches."

"Switches?"

"Switches, rods, lashes, however you please to call them."

"Do you whip, my dear?"

"My darling, and I endure like treatment. It's the most delicious passion I know of; none surer to inflame my entire being. Nobody doubts nowadays but that passive flagellation is of prime efficacity; it is a matchles restorative, supplying new vitality to the frame wearied by over-indulgence. No wonder then that all those who have worn themselves to a frazzle in riot and sport have regular and avid recourse to the painful and invigorating operation of flagellation, supreme remedy for exhaustion from feebleness about the loins or total loss of strength, or for a cold, vicious and oddly organized constitution. O Juliette! to break in to this degradation some youthful object, appealing and mild and who when it is possible is somehow related to us, harshly to inflict upon her this form of torture, all the characteristics whereof are so emphatically voluptuous, to be amused by her tears, excited by her distress, irritated by her capers, inflamed by her writhings, by that voluptuous dancing perfomed to the music of pain, to make her blood flow, her sweat, her tears, to feast upon them, upon her pretty face to mark and exalt at contortions of sufferings and the twitching caused by despair. O Juliette! that is joy. Nor ought you be surprised to discover this taste in a woman. Brantôme with charming candor and naivete offers us various examples in support of these theses. There was, saye he, a fashionable and distinguished lady, equally beautiful and rich; for several years she had been a widow, and her moral corruption was astonishing. She used to hold parties; to them she would invite girls of high social rank, and always of exceptional beauty, it was her pleasure to undress her guests and give them fierce spankings. Sometimes she was content to bare their behinds instead of stripping them altogether naked, from the act of lifting their skirts and keeping them raised

deriving yet more satisfaction than that afforded her when they were nude and hence easy prey.

"A great nobleman, Brantôme tells us farther on, also indulged in this same pleasure of beating his wife, either nude or with her skirts pulled up.

"Of contemporaries we have examples enough, do we not, and better ones at that; and could not your friend Saint-Fond, who never fails to give his daughter her daily lashing, serve as the subject for an entire corpus of modern research?"

"I've been the victim of that taste," I observed, "but I rather fancy it nonetheless, and may well adopt it some day in my turn. Oh yes, Clairwil, I'll acquire all your tastes, I wish if I possibly can to become identical to you; henceforth Juliette shall know no happiness until she has taken on all your vices."

The four women made their entrance; they were naked in accordance with my friend's desire, and as a group they surely presented a stirring sight to lewdness. There were lovely bodies and most agreeable faces.

"They will do," said Clairwill, glancing briefly at each.

Each had a bundle of switches in her hand; these Clairwil examined rather more closely.

"Very well, we shall proceed by order of age. Approach," she said to the youngest, "come here and prostrate yourself at my feet. Now humbly beg pardon for your clumsy behavior yesterday."

"Clumsy behavior? Madame, I don't believe I—"

And Clairwil gave her a resounding slap across the face.

"I tell you you behaved clumsily, I order you to kneel and ask forgiveness."

"Oh indeed, madame," said the little girl, falling to her knees, "I ask it with all my heart."

"But I don't intend to forgive you without first punishing you. Stand up obediently this way."

"You're a little slut," says Clairwil. "I saw what you were doing yesterday: I'll not have you committing such outrages. I favor morality, I do, I expect modesty in girls."

"Madame, I swear to you—"

"No swearing, whore, and no excuses either," Clairwil interrupted, punching the girl's flank; "guilty or not, you're due to be vexed, for I intend to amuse myself. Wretched little creatures of your sort are no use whatever except for providing entertainment to women of mine."

After she was finished with the three girls, my turn came; I kissed her in similar wise, praised her firm handling of the victim.

"Juliette," said she, "the fever of delirium is taking fast hold of my senses; I must warn you that these other hussies are going to be more uncompromisingly dealt with."

"Very well," says she, pointing to a girl, "I believe you are next in line. Step up, whore."

The latter, terrified by what has just been done to her comrade, instead of obeying, shrinks back. But Clairwil, who was in no merciful mood, seizes her by the arm and gives her several slaps. She begins to weep.

"Good," says Clairwil. "That's what I like."

"Juliette, do you wish me to thrash you too?"

"By all means yes," I answered at once, "how can you suspect me of not passionately desiring whatever adds to the sum of your delights? Fie! Whip away, here's my body, my whole being is yours to do with as you like."

"Your whores, are they dumb?"

We were arrived at an awkward pass; for these girls, chosen out of the best ranks of the bourgeoisie, and never having been libertine except with me, had poor acquaintance with any idiom apt to be agreeable to Clairwil's ears; they did the best they were able, however, but I was obliged to aid them, and virtually all alone had to supply the caustic insults she was pleased to hear. The lesbian squirmed, panted and sighed incontinently, but nothing came of it; postures and episodes had to be changed once again. I have never seen anything so majestic, nor so beautiful, nor so animated as that superb woman at the conclusion of this scene.

"O Juliette you must admit that nothing paves a surer nor a smoother way to horror than the calm self-confidence, impunity, capital and good health we enjoy; so suggest to me the idea for a few crimes . . . I'll ac-

complish them while you look on. . . . Let's, oh I beseech you, let's perpetrate an infamy . . ."

Clairwil, quite as eccentric in her comportment at table as in bed, fed only on fowl and game, and they had to be boned and then served up disguised in all sorts of forms; her usual drink was sweetened water and it had to be iced regardless of the season, and to every pint of this liquid she added twenty drops of essence of lemon and two spoonfuls of orange flower extract; she never touched wine, but consumed large amounts of coffee and liqueurs; she ate in excessive quantity, furthermore, of the better than fifty dishes put before her she attacked every one. Foreadvised of her tastes, I saw to it that her desires were accommodated, and it defies belief, the tale of all she made away with. That charming person whose custom was whenever and wherever possible to secure the adoption of her private tastes, recommended them to me so heartily that she induced me to observe her diet, but not her abstinence from wine; I still indulge very heavily in it and shall doubtless continue to do so for the rest of my life.

While we were supping I confessed to Clairwil my astonishment at the extents of her libertinage.

"You haven't seen much yet," she replied, "little beyond a faint sketch of what I regularly accomplish in lewd debauchery. I am most eager that we essay truly extraordinary things together; I shall have you admitted into a society I belong to, and whose members specialize in obscenities of a much superior dimension. To its meetings each husband must bring his wife, each brother his sister, each father his daughter, each bachelor a friend, each lover his mistress; and, gathered in a spacious hall, each takes his pleasure with what pleases him most, subject to no rule save that of his desire, to no limit save that of his imagination; the most praiseworthy is he who acquits himself of the greatest and most numerous extravagances, and cash prizes are awarded to those who distinguish themselves in infamy or who invent new ways and means for procuring oneself pleasure."

"O dearest friend," I cried, taking Clairwil in my arms, "you simply have no idea how those few details excite me, nor how happy I would be to join your circle."

"Yes, but will you be considered eligible? Candidates are submitted to the most arduous tests."

"Do you doubt of my capacity, of my determination? And whatever these initiations may be, do you suppose I will flinch, knowing as you do all that I have performed intrepidly in the company of Noirceuil and Saint-Fond?"

"True enough," she conceded, "you're not shy, it must be owned. Your chances of being admitted are better than fair." Then a note of enthusiasm entered her voice. "O Juliette, as 'tis forever to the disgust, to the restlessness, to the despair at not ever having found either a mutual understanding or mutual pleasure with the object to which we are conventionally bound that are owing all of wedlock's miseries, to remedy this hideous situation, to counteract the hideous social practices whereby mismatched individuals are imprisoned all their lives in nightmarish unions, it would be necessary that all men and all women federate into such clubs. A hundred husbands, a hundred fathers corporatively with their wives or daughters, are availed thereby of all they lack. Ceding my husband to Climene, she obtains everything her own husband cannot give her and, from the one she abandons to me, I derive all the delights mine is incapable of providing me. These exchanges multiply and thus, you see, in a single evening every woman enjoys a hundred men, each man as many women; in the course of these foregatherings characters develop; one has an opportunity to study oneself; the most entire freedom of taste or fancy holds sway there: the man who dislikes women amuses himself with his fellows, the woman who is fond of persons of her own sex simply follows the dictates of her penchants also; no constraints, no hindrances, no modesty, the mere desire to increase one's pleasures ensures that each will pool all his resources. Such arrangements annihilate jealousy, forever destroy the fear of cuckoldry, two of life's most pernicious poisons, and for that reason alone merit preference over those monotonous partnerships in which husband and wife, pining their lives away one in the presence of the other, are doomed either to everlasting boredom and displeasure, or to grief at being unable to dissolve their marriage save it be at the price of dishonor for them

both. May our example persuade mankind to do as we. It was during my first year of marriage I was granted membership, I was just sixteen then. Oh yes, making my debut, I confess I did indeed blush at having to appear naked before all those men and to participate in their carryings-on and in those of the women who, because of my age and figure, were drawn to me like flies to sugar; but in three days I was conducting myself like a veteran. The example of the others seduced me.

"There you have an instance," said she, "of how one accustoms oneself to cynicism, a habit of mind whereof proof will be required of you ere you are accepted into our society."

We separated, enchanted by one another and promising to get together again at the very first opportunity.

Noirceuil was impatient to find out how my liaison with Mme. de Clairwil was progressing; the warmth wherewith I spoke of her translated my gratitude. He wanted graphic particulars, I supplied them; and, as Clairwil had done, he criticized me for not having a more numerous complement of women in my household. I increased them by eight the very next day, which gave me a harem of twelve of the prettiest creatures in Paris; I exchanged them against a dozen fresh ones every month.

I mentioned the society Clairwil belong to; did Noirceuil attend its meetings?

"In the days when men were in the majority there," he replied, "I never missed a single one; but I have given up going, since everything has fallen into the hands of a sex whose authority I dislike. Saint-Fond felt the same way and dropped out shortly after I did. But that is not particularly relevant," Noirceuil continued; "if those orgies amuse you, and since Clairwil enjoys them, there is no reason why you shouldn't join in: everything vicious must be given a fair try, and only virtue is thoroughly boring." Then, he enquired, had my new friend recounted her adventures to me in detail?

"No," said I.

"Philosophical in spirit though you are, and the fact cannot have escaped her notice," Noirceuil remarked, "she probably feared lest you'd be scandalized. For that Clairwil is a very paragon of lust, cruelty, debauchery

and atheism; there is no horror, no execration wherewith she is not soiled profoundly; her social position and boundless wealth have always saved her from the rope, but she's merited it twenty times over: reckon up the sum of her daily activities and there you have the total of her crimes, and had she been hanged every day of her life 'twould never have been without cause."

"Rest assured," I rejoined, "all my efforts shall be bent in that direction."

It was shortly afterward that, mightily stirred up by what I had been witness to, by the things I had been hearing, I reached the stage where I simply could not restrain myself any longer, I had absolutely to commit a crime of my own; and I was eager to learn, moreover, whether I could truly rely upon the impunity that had been promised me. So I took counsel with myself and decided to enact one such horror as I was being schooled in day in and day out. Wishing to put both my daring and my savagery to the test, I got into man's attire and, a brace of pistols in my pocket, went out alone, stood in a back street, and waited for the first comer, with the aim of robbing and hurting him for my pleasure. I was leaning against the wall; I was in that state of inner turmoil great passions provoke, and whose impact upon the animal spirits is necessary to the most elementary criminal delight. I glistened sweat. Every murmur, every footfall raised my hopes. The very faintest movement in the shadows made me think my prey was nigh; and then I heard sounds of lamentation. I sped in the direction whence they came, they were groans; I approached, 'tis a poor woman huddled upon a doorstep.

"And who are you?" I enquire drawing close to the creature.

"The most unfortunate of women," is her tearful reply; and I observe that she cannot be over thirty years of age; "and if you are death's messenger, you bring me glad tidings."

"But your difficulties are of precisely what kind?"

"They are frightful," she said, and as she sat up the lamplight revealed her mild inviting features, "yes, few have ever been so unlucky as I. We've had no work for a week, no money, we had a room in this building, we

weren't able to pay the rent, nor able either to buy milk for the baby—they've taken it away from me and put my husband in jail. I, too, would have been arrested had I not run away from those monsters who treated us so brutally. You see me lying on the threshold of a house that belonged to me once, for I have not always been poor. In those days, when I could afford to, I helped the needy; will you do for me now what I used to do for them? I do not ask much."

A subtle glow stole through my veins as I heard those words, savored that accent.

"Get up," said I. "I'm a man, as you can see. You have a body left to you, don't you? I intend to amuse myself with it."

And taking strong hold of her arm, I forced her to stand still while I proceeded to an investigation. It brought agreeable things to light; those skirts harbored charms very fair, very firm, very appetizing.

"Leave me be, leave me be, I shudder at all these horrors. Though poor, I am honest; don't humiliate me, for pity's sake!"

She endeavors to break away from me, I seize her by the hair, raise a pistol to her temple: "Be off, Duggeress," I say, "off to hell with you, and tell them there that Juliette sent you."

Hearing the pistol shot, people had come to their windows; I saw a few heads and now began to think of my safety. Cries of "Police, police!" went up on all sides. It was just after midnight I was hailed, ordered to halt; the discovery of my weapons eliminated all doubt; I was asked my name.

"You'll be informed at the Minister's," I said brazenly. "Take me to the Hôtel de Saint-Fond."

Dumbfounded, the sergeant does not, dare not comply; I am manacled, I am pinioned . . . delicious are the fetters of the crime you adore, and wearing them causes joy.

Saint-Fond had not yet retired; a servant notified him, I was led in, the Minister greeted me with a smile.

"That will do," he said to the sergeant; "had you not brought this lady here to my house you were as good as hanged. You may go now, sir, and resume your func-

tions; consider that you have done your duty. What has just transpired shall remain a mystery. You are not to intrude into it; I presume I need say no more."

Alone with my lover, I related all that had passed.

"Unless I am mistaken, my lord, her name was Simon."

"Simon. Of course. I handled that affair four or five days ago. That's it, Simon. I had the husband jailed and the infant removed to the poorhouse. My stars, Juliette, I remember the woman too: she was very pretty and very well-behaved. I was reserving her for your pimps; and she told you the truth, that family was once quite well to do, bankruptcy altered all that. Well, you've simply added the finishing touches to my crime, and this conclusion makes the story delicious from beginning to end."

I said Saint-Fond's standard was raised; my masculine dress was completing his delirium. He led me into the boudoir where he had received me the first time I had come to his house.

"Here, Juliette, before I forget: the sum I promised you for crimes of your personal commission. A carriage is waiting for you, go home now, tomorrow you will leave for the estate outside Sceaux which I bought for you last month; take only a few companions along, four of your female domestics should suffice—the prettiest of the lot however—your cook too, your butler, and the three virgins listed for the next supper. Installed in the country, you'll await further instructions from me; that's all I'll tell you for the time being."

I left very content with the succes of my crime, full of pleasure at having committed it; and departed from Paris on the morrow.

Scarcely was I established in that rural domain, completely isolated, as solitary as the Thebais, then there came one of my servants to inform me a stranger was arrived, a person of condition who said he had been sent by the Minister and wished to speak with me.

"Ask him to wait," said I, and unsealed the message he had brought from Saint-Fond. It read as follows: "Have your domestics seize the bearer of this letter straightway, he is to be confined in one of the dungeons I have caused to be built in the cellars of your house. This individual is not to be allowed to escape; I hold

you responsible for him. His wife and daughter will also appear: you will deal with them in the same manner. These are my orders. Adieu." I had the stranger ushered in.

"Sir," said I, maintaining the appearance of perfect equanimity and graciousness, "you are doubtless a friend of his lordship's?"

"Both my family and I have for a long time been the beneficiaries of his generosities and kindness, madame."

"'Tis plain from his letter, monsieur. . . . But allow me to give my servants instructions so that you may be received in such wise as the Minister seems to desire."

Bidding him be seated, I went out of the room.

My servants, and they were rather more slaves than domestics, provided themselves with rope and were at my side when I returned to the visitor.

"Conduct this gentleman," I told them, "to the quarters his lordship would have him occupy," and my retainers, powerful bucks they were, set hard upon our guest and dragged him off to a very abominable cell far under ground.

"Madame! I protest! There is some mistake!" cried the unlucky dupe of Saint-Fond's deceit and mine.

No sooner was I back in the drawing room than I heard carriage wheels on the drive. Out stepped the stranger's wife and daughter, and the letters of introduction they presented were exact replicas of his.

Ah Saint-Fond, I said to myself, casting a glance upon those two women, admiring the beauty of the mother, who was a superb thirty-six, the sweet modesty and grace of the daughter, only then entering her sixteenth year, ah Saint-Fond! your fell accursed lust has much to do with these ministerial proceedings, 'tis but too certain. And in this, as in everything else you do, are you not guided far more by your vices than by the interests of your country?

I would be hard pressed to give an adequate description of the moans and tears those two wretches let forth when they beheld themselves dragged infamously off to the dungeons readied for them; but, no more moved by the weeping and wailing of the mother and daughter than I had been by the entreaties of the father, I was

concerned only to take the greatest precautions for their safekeeping, and was not at ease until I had these important prisoners behind the stoutest bars and all the keys in my pocket.

Meditating upon what the fate of these individuals might be, it did not occur to me that it would involve more than detention, in as much as executions were my affair and I had received no instructions to slay; and while I was in the middle of pondering these matters, lo! the arrival of a fourth personage was announced to me. Heavens, what is my surprise upon recognizing the selfsame young man who, you will recall, the first time I held conversation with Saint-Fond, at the latter's bidding struck me three blows of a cane upon the shoulders. He, too, came bearing a letter: I opened it at once.

"Greet this man warmly and entertain him well," I read; "you must surely remember him, for you carried his marks awhile, and they were his hands that gripped you at our first voluptuous rencounter in your house. He is to take the leading role in the drama that will be staged tomorrow; in him welcome the Nantes executioner, who upon my orders has come to put to death the three persons now your prisoners: obliged to produce these three heads the day after tomorrow before the Queen under pain of losing my post, I would myself (needless to say) wield the ax, had not Her Majesty expressed the very keenest desire to receive the spoils out of none other than the public officer's hands. It is for that reason the latter, arriving in Paris, found his services not immediately required there, and himself dispatched posthaste to your residence, whither he comes in ignorance of the business he is to attend to. You may instruct him now; but refrain absolutely from permitting him a glimpse of his prey, this is essential; expect me tomorrow morning. Meanwhile treat the prisoners, and the women especially, very rigorously: bread only, a little water, and no daylight."

"Sir," said I, turning to the most recent of my visitors, "the Minister mentions in his letter that we, you and I, are not unknown to one another. 'Tis true. Once upon a time you—"

"Aye, Madame. Orders, alas, are orders."

"Indeed they are, and I harbor no grudge against you," I went on, giving him my hand, which he kissed with ardor. "But it is dinnertime. First to table; we'll discuss afterwards."

Delcour was twenty-eight, a very pretty fellow, his air and calling pleased me mightily. I showered attentions upon him, and they were quite sincere; when we were through our meal I mounted as skillful an attack as ever you've seen. Delcour soon exhibited evidence of the success of my advances.

"Heavenly creature," Delcour replied, "it isn't scorn I feel for you, no, nor shall it be hatred; you inspire altogether different sentiments in me. You deserve to be worshipped and worship you I shall, regretting that your ecstasy had its origin solely in that which earns me the loathing of others."

" 'Tis of no importance, that," said I. "A mere matter of opinion, and opinion varies, as you observe, since the source of my fondness for you is precisely this very thing which puts you at a remove from the rest of mankind; however, this is but debauchery on my part, you shouldn't interpret it as anything else. My attachment to the Minister, my manner of living with him bar me from intrigues and I'll certainly never contemplate any. We'll make the most of this evening, and of the whole night if you like; and there's an end to it."

"Ah madame," the young man said with almost respectfulness, "of you I ask only your protection and your gracious kindness."

"You shall never want for either; but in return you must comply with all that results from my imagination. I must warn you, it is subject to all sorts of disorders, and they sometimes lead far."

"Tell me, to begin with, just why Saint-Fond had you strike me upon the shoulders that first time I saw you. It puzzled me then and still does."

"Libertinage, madame, sheer libertinage. You know the Minister. He has his quirks."

"He has you take part in luxurious scenes then?"

"Whenever I am in Paris."

"You have beaten him? Flogged him?"

"Frequently."

"Have you ever gone farther?"

"Allow me to respect the Minister's secrets, madame. In this connection your guesses are very apt to be correct since they would be based on a good acquaintance of his lordship."

"Can you say whether he has at any time formulated projects against me?"

"Madame, towards you his attitude has always been, to my knowledge, one of affection and trust; he is greatly attached to you, you may take my word for it."

"And so am I to him: I adore him, I hope he is fully aware of it. However, since you would not have me tempt you to indiscretion, we'll talk of other things. Tell me, if you please, how are you able to take the life of some individual who has never wronged you in any way?"

"Be very certain, madame," was Delcour's answer, "that in my calling none of us attains this degree of rationalized and scientific ferocity save through principles that are largely unknown to folk in general."

"My friend," I said to Delcour, "you have already given me much food for thought, a single idea cast into a brain like mine produces the effect there of a spark in a keg of gunpowder—yes, I sense it, we have similar minds. It will, believe me, give me great pleasure to behold you in action; but, my dear, you must possess a vast store of information and experience, be so kind as to dilate upon the mechanics of the thing."

"What do you wish to ask, madame?"

"You consider that every passion can be increased or nourished by lust?" asked Delcour.

"Lust is to the passions what the nervous fluid is to life: it sustains them all, it supplies strength to them all, and the proof thereof is that a man who, as they say, hasn't any balls, will never have any passions."

"And so you suppose that ambition, cruelty, greed, vindictiveness as motivations lead to the same thing as lust?"

"Yes, I am convinced. Mark you, I am speaking now from personal experience."

"And it is mine also, madame," Delcour rejoined, "I'll not attempt to conceal it any longer."

"I rejoice at your frankness, my dear, it helps me to know you."

At this point I grew very hot indeed. "Come now, look alive, we must try some extraordinary tricks."

"What would you have me do?"

"Beat me, outrage me, lash me; isn't that what you do with women every day? aren't those the foul violences which, electrifying you, make you capable of the rest? Well? Answer."

" 'Tis even so."

"Of course. Well, you've a job to perform tomorrow, start preparing for it today. There is my body. It is at your disposal."

And Delcour, following my instructions, having started in with a dozen slaps and kicks in the behind, took up a bundle of withes.

"Delcour," I cried, "O divine mentor to the human race! you whom I adore and from whom I expect unheard-of joys, lay on, lay on, I say, whip your slut harder, faster, imprint the marks of your savagery upon her, for she yearns to wear them."

Saint-Fond put in his appearance the next day around noon; he dismissed his servants and his coach, and came directly into the salon to greet me; we embraced. Uncertain what his reaction would be to the little prank I had played with Delcour, but anxious lest he hear the story from someone else, I told him everything.

"Juliette," he said when I had concluded, "had I not assured you long ago that I would take the most indulgent view of your aberrations, I would scold you now. Your one mistake was in your choice of a partner. Are you so sure you can count upon Delcour's discretion? I am glad, however, that you have made his acquaintance; for two years he was my bardash:* he is from Nantes, where his father was hangman, a fact which stimulated my interest in the boy: I took his maidenhead, and when I was weary of him, I turned him over to the Paris executioner, whose aide he remained up until the time his father died; he inherited his post at Nantes. The lad is not without intelligence, he is ex-

* A boy kept for unnatural purposes.

cessively libertine; and, as I just hinted, he isn't the sort who merits overmuch trust. But let me tell you something about our captives.

"Of all the men in France, Monsieur de Cloris has probably contributed most to my advancement; the year I was preferred to the Ministry, he, though very young at the time, was sleeping with the Duchesse de G****, whose power at court was immense, and, owing primarily to the maneuvering and intrigues of the two of them, I obtained from the King the position I still hold. As of that moment I contracted an unsuperable loathing for Cloris; I would go to any lengths to avoid encountering him, I dreaded the sight of him, I hated him; while his protectress was alive I postponed taking action; but she has just passed away, or, perhaps, I have just put her out of the way; this brought Cloris to the top of my blacklist; he married my cousin-german."

"What, my lord! This woman is your cousin?"

"She is, Juliette, and the fact has contributed not a little to her doom. I had designs upon that woman; she always resisted my desires. Little by little they shifted to her daughter; here I met with yet more stubborn resistance; with the result that my rage, and my extreme desire to see the whole family gone to blazes, reached the decisive pitch. To promote its undoing I resorted to every known kind of cunning baseness, lie and calumny; and I have finally so aroused the Queen's antipathies to the father and daughter, by giving her to understand that Cloris once sold his child to the King, that at our last interview Her Majesty, much wrought up, commanded me to arrange their deaths. She adamantly insists upon having their heads by tomorrow; my recompense has been fixed at three millions apiece: I shall obey the Queen's orders and very joyfully, you may be sure, and very pleasurable will be the episodes wherewith I plan to accompany my revenge."

"My lord, it puts my brain into an indescribable whirl."

"Have you given orders that we be left alone and that nobody, saving only those who are necessary to the scene, be under any circumstances admitted to the house?"

"Yes, my lord, and I have added that anybody who ventures to intrude shall be hanged on the spot: a squadron of troopers is lying at Sceaux to lend me assistance in case of need; never has the stage been more impeccably set for a crime. We shall, the two of us, be able to relish the pleasure under ideal conditions and in absolute security."

"Ah, my dear, I am gladdened by those words."

"Visibly, my lord."

"And you?"

Whereupon, in search of proof positive of a crisis which I was indeed undergoing, the rake lifts my skirt.

"You know," the Minister confesses, "I adore discovering such symptoms in you, for they roundly attest the similarity of our ways of thinking."

"The weather is warm," I said, "I recommend that you adopt savage attire, leaving your arms and thighs bare; your headdress ought to resemble a dragon or serpent in the Patagonian manner, you'll smear red greasepaint all over your face, we'll fit you with moustaches, you'll wear a broad baldrick, girding on all the instruments requires for the tortures you plan to inflict upon your victims: this costume will terrify them for a certainty."

"You are right, Juliette, you are quite right. I'll ask you to rig me out in that way."

"Apparel and gear are imperative; tell me if in the courts of law our precious baffoons, the judges, don't resemble heroes out of comedy or charlatans."

Dinner was announced, we repaired to table and pursued our conversation in the same tone.

"Yes, by all means," the Minister proceeded, "the laws must be made more severe; the only happily governed countries are those where the Inquisition reigns. O Juliette, do not forget that if kings are beginning to lose their credit in Europe, it's the vulgarity they've acquired that has been their downfall; had they remained aloof and invisible like the sovereigns of Asia, the whole world would yet tremble at the sound of their names. Contempt is bred of familiarity, and familiarity with what is daily within public view; the Romans must surely have stood

in greater awe of Tiberius off on Capri, than of a Titus wandering around the city consoling the poor."

"But this despotism," I said to Saint-Fond, "you favor it because you are so powerful; do you suppose however that it is equally pleasing to the weak?"

"It pleases everybody, Juliette," Saint-Fond replied; "mankind tends universally in that direction. I affirm that the fundamental, profoundest and keenest penchant in man is incontestably to enchain his fellow-creatures and to tyrannize them with all his might. For as Noirceuil has often told you, happiness lies neither in vice nor in virtue; but in the manner we appreciate the one and the other, and the choice we make pursuant to our intimate organization."

"The most outstanding service one could do to some young person," I observed, "would then be to pluck out of him all the weeds of virtue Nature or education might have sown in his soul?"

"That is exact, snatch them out and if possible stifle them while they are yet in infancy," Saint-Fond answered.

"My lord," I put in, "I would like to have you prove to me there is no real distinction to be drawn between the human slave and an animal."

"Glance at the works of Nature," this philosopher answered me, "and judge for yourself whether she has not, in forming the two classes of men, made them vastly unalike; I ask you to put aside partiality, and to decide: have they the same voice, the same skin, the same limbs, the same gait, the same tastes, have they, I venture to enquire, have they the same needs?

"Now perform the same study upon the animal resembling man the closest, upon, for example, the chimpanzee; let me, I say, compare this animal to some representative of the slave caste; what a host of similarities I find! The man of the people is simply the species that stands next above the chimpanzee on the ladder; and the distance separating them is, if anything, less than that between him and the individual belonging to the superior caste. And why should Nature, who so assiduously observes these gradations in all her works, have neglected them here? Are all plants alike? No. Are all animals the same in aspect and strength? No. Dare

you compare a shrub to the majestic poplar, a pugdog to the proud Great Dane, the Corsican mountain pony to the spirited Andalusian stallion? So many essential differences within the same overall categories; and why do you object to the same differences existing among men? You should certainly never lump the virile Prussian grenadier and the debilitated Hottentot in the same class."

"Kiss me, my beloved," I cried, throwing myself into the arms of a man whose principles I simply could not resist; "to me you are as a god, 'tis at your feet I want to pass my life."

"A propos," quoth the Minister, getting up from table and leading me to the couch in the salon, "I forgot to tell you that the King is fonder of me than ever; I've just had new proof of his attachment. From somewhere he got the idea I am burdened by heavy debts, and has given me two millions to straighten out my affairs. 'Tis only just you share in my good fortune, Juliette; I am turning half the gift over to you; continue to approve my tenets and to serve me well, I'll raise you so high in the world you'll have no more trouble believing in your superiority over others; you cannot imagine the joy I derive in advancing you to atop the very pinnacle, and making your pre-eminence conditional upon profound humility and unbound obedience toward me alone. I wish you to be the idol of others and, at the same time, my slave."

"O my love, how delicious are the crimes when impunity veils them, when duty itself prescribes them. How divine it is to swim in gold and, as one reckons up one's wealth, to be able to say, here are the means to every black deed, to every pleasure; with this, all my wishes can be made to come true, all my fancies can be satisfied; no woman will resist me, none of my desires will fail of realization, my wealth will procure amendments in the law itself, and I'll be despot without let or hindrance."

I kissed Saint-Fond a thousand times over and, profiting from the enthusiasm, the drunkenness he was carried away by, and above all from his predisposition to me, I had him sign a *lettre de cachet* writ out for the arrest

of Elvire's father, who wished to deprive me of her, and wheedled two or three other favors out of him, each of which were worth about five hundred thousand francs to me. And the fumes of the excellent dinner I had just provided him rising to his head, he announced he was sleepy and would retire for a little; he departed to his chamber, and I looked to the completion of the arrangements for the evening's entertainments.

Saint-Fond woke towards five that afternoon. By then everything stood ready in the salon, and this is the way the scene and the actors were disposed: nude and simply decked in garlands of roses, there were, on the right, the three maids intended for the orgies, I'd grouped them like Botticelli's Graces; all three were girls of condition spirited out of school at Melun, and their beauty was startling.

Louise was the name of the first: she was fair-haired, and never was a more interesting face beheld.

The second was named Hélène: slender in the waist, slight of build and tall for her age, long brown tresses, Love's own eyes and mouth; beautiful though she was, most would have allowed her surpassed by Fulvie, ravishing also.

In the center, to offer a contrast to this group, I had stationed the ill-destined family, likewise naked and festooned with black crêpe: the father and the mother were watching one another in expectation of the worst, at their feet lay the charming Julie; heavy iron rubbed their bare skin raw, the nipple on Julie's left breast peeped through a link: Another length of chain was visible between the thighs of Mme. de Cloris; Delcour, whom I had outfitted in the terrifying garb of a demon out of hell and armed with the sword, held the end of the chain which ever and anon he would tug, with dreadful effect wherever it touched flesh.

Next, in the pose of the Venus Calypygus, their backs to Saint-Fond, draped in a simple brown-and-white gauze, were my four women:

The first was twenty-two, superb, a veritable Minerva, magnificently formed; her name was Délie.

The name of the second was Montalme: twenty, in full bloom, as nicely fleshed a woman can be.

Palmire was nineteen. She was blonde and had the romantic countenance of those girls you always like to see in tears.

Seventeen years old, Blaisine had a mischievous look, faultless teeth, the sauciest eyes that ever fired desire.

And at the far left of this semi-circle were placed two strapping lads, five feet and ten inches in height, awesomely membered; they were standing face to face and were nakedly exchanging passionate kisses.

"Charming," said Saint-Fond upon opening his eyes, "heavenly! No possible mistake, all this attests the mind and art of Juliette. Have the guilty ones brought hither."

Delcour marched the family forward.

"You are all three under accusation of enormous crimes," the Minister began.

"They are unjust orders," Cloris replied. "Yes, you know perfectly well that we are innocent. But if we are under suspicion, then let us be put on fair trial, but not exposed this way to the tigerish lust of one who sports with us only to quicken his ignoble passions."

Then Saint-Fond said: "You allude to the law. You have broken the law, you have violated it too grievously to invoke its protection; its full severity is all you have a right to expect now."

"You," was Cloris' proud answer, "you are the hireling of a tyrant and the creature of a whore. Posterity will judge me."

Here Saint-Fond rises in fury; he beckons to me, "Come." Going close to the well-chained insolent, "You are ill used? Call not on the opinion of later times, but take matters into your own hands now. Are you a man? Then exert yourself a little."

"Coward, were I to get free you'd run off in a panic!"

"You are quite right. But you are not going to get free, I have you in my power, I enjoy the situation; would you deprive me of enjoyment? Try."

"Everything you have you owe to me."

"You have only yourself to blame for that," the Minister said.

"Ah my lord!" said those poor creatures as he drew near them, "what have we done to deserve such barbarous treatment?"

"Be courageous, wife," cried the luckless husband, "death shall soon deliver us from these outrages, we'll suffer no more and remorse shall gnaw at this monster's soul."

"Remorse," said Saint-Fond, chuckling, "is not a sentiment wherewith I shall ever have acquaintance, lest it be for sparing you."

First to be unbound was Mme. de Cloris. She was brought to the Minister.

"Ah whore," said he, "do you remember all the obstacles you hurled in my path, all your stubbornness in the past? Dear cousin, cherished cousin, sweet cousin, I'll have you cheap today."

"Take that stuff away, Juliette," says he, pulling away from the mother in order to have at the daughter, I'm tired. "Little whore," he declares, "your father and your mother are both aware of all I did in my attempts to gain possession of you: I have you today, and today they're going to regret having thwarted me previously."

Considering the man I was dealing with, it was necessary that I hew to the line laid down by his favorite pleasures; the voluptuous groups awaiting him had been disposed about in three alcoves decorated with all that is emblematic of Death. The entire room was hung in black: bones, skulls, a great store of rods, switches, withes, martinets and knives were the furnitures.

A dim, a lugubrious lamp hung in the middle of the room the vaults whereof were likewise covered with dismal appurtenances; various instruments of torture were scattered here and there about; among other objects one saw a most unusual wheel. This machine, of Delcour's contriving, had not yet been essayed by Saint-Fond; upon seeing it, he waxed very enthusiastic and then and there gave its inventor a fifty-thousand-franc gratuity. From that moment on his single preoccupation was to choose her from among the three victims, his perfidious gaze flitted from one girl to the next. The conclusion was foregone: the unlucky Fulvie being the most beautiful, 'twas she who stood condemned in the tyrant's heart.

Betwixt Delcour and me, Saint-Fond first starts by setting himself in one after the other of the three armchairs which were placed one in front of each alcove.

Palmore, of my women she alone not employed in a niche, is posted behind his chair.

'Twas then Saint-Fond led each maiden away into a remote chamber and passed a brief interval with her alone. We do not know what he told them, nor what he did; nor dared we even question them when they were brought back. In all likelihood he apprised them of their destinies, for each returned weeping from the interview. While Saint-Fond's consultations were in progress Delcour indicated to me that a certain subtle byplay ordinarily followed this announcement; and that since the outset of his acquaintance with the Minister, he, Delcour, had always observed that pronouncing sentence left his lordship overwhelmed by a sweet and mysterious anguish. Such was now the case, for he came back profoundly agitated and flushed.

Saint-Fond at first uses the switches Delcour and I hand over to him; he metes out a hundred strokes to each victim and deals each lesbian fifty; the second round sees the steel-tipped martinent in service, each victim is favored with two hundred blows thereof, each girl with a mere dozen.

Saint-Fond's shrieks, his disport, his foul ungodly language were all apalling; he was only half conscious were we bore him to the bed where, he nevertheless gave me to understand, he wished to have me pass the night at his side.

This peerless libertine, quite as though he had just performed wonders of charity, enjoyed ten hours of blissful undisturbed sleep. I watched the rest; and if I had doubted it before, I was convinced now, that it is easy to build oneself a conscience to sort evenly with one's opinions, and that after the initial effort has been made, nothing afterward stands in one's way.

When he woke up, the Minister asked me if it were not true that he was the wickedest man in the world. Knowing the pleasure I would give by answering in the affirmative, I did not by any means contradict him; and he smiled.

"You flatter me."

"Do I? 'Tis sincere."

"I rather suppose so. Ah, my angel," said he, yawning,

"could it be otherwise with me? Is it my fault if this is how I am, and if Nature put the most irresistible taste for vice in me, and not so much as a hint of a bent for virtue? Don't you agree that I serve her quite as well as some other in whom she engrained a fondness for doing good deeds? That seems self-evident to me; and this likewise, that there would be no greater folly than willfully to cross her purpose as it regards us individually; I am the poisonous plant she makes grow by the balsam tree, and find my manner of being no more to be regretted than I would esteem enviable that of the virtuous man; and once we realize that upon earth there must be the bitter together with the better, can it make one jot of difference to us whether we are numbered in this category or that? From what I have just said, you will appreciate, Juliette, how obstacles, exerting their restrictive influence upon the form of your delirium, will always tend to confine it within the boundaries of decency and virtue, thus altering its essence; upon your delirium obstacles of any sort have a dampening effect, water poured on fire; a hindering effect, so many chains, so many clogs.

"Indulge yourself, oh my Juliette, without fear, proudly surrender to the impetuosity of your tastes, to the irregularity of your caprices, to the blazing ardor of your desires; your wantonness is my cheer, your pleasures my joy; be ever guided by them, ruled by them and by nothing else; may your voluptuous imagination ensure variety to our disorders; 'tis only by multiplying them we'll attain happiness."

Deeply moved by Saint-Fond's speech, I ventured to indicate that my sole fear was of the possibility his kindness to me might come to an end.

"Juliette," he gave me answer, "you'd have fallen out of grace a good while before this had I merely been your lover; for, however beautiful she may be, the favors of a woman cannot exert *prise* upon me for long. No, Juliette, no change of heart in me; if ever I quit you it will be you the cause of our separation, only you. Maintain your good behavior, I tell you, be active in the service of my pleasures; let not a moment go by when I do not develop some new vice in you or further refine an old one; while

we are at home, show me submissiveness carried to the last degree of baseness, the lower you crawl cringingly at my feet, the higher I, from pride, shall set you above others; above all, whatsoever may be the thing I require you to do, do it without ever displaying any weakness, and I shall render you the happiest of women as you shall render me the luckiest of men."

"O my master," said I, "be ever sure that if I would reign over the world, it is to bring it on its knees in homage to you."

Next we left off generalities to discuss certain particulars. He spoke in very great praise of Delcour.

"He is full of imagination," said the Minister, "he is young and vigorous besides, and I must compliment you upon having desired him. We are alike, aren't we, Juliette?" he went on.

"By the way," the Minister continued, "one of those lesbians has an appalling effect upon my nerves—I refer to the pretty blond, the whom me thinks obtained the last of me."

"Palmire?"

"Yes, 'twas doubtless so I heard you call her. . . . How did you gain possession of the wench?"

"She was working at a dressmaker's, was just turned eighteen when I found her and as pure as a babe; Palmire is an orphan. She comes of a good line, and has no parents save an elderly aunt who gave me an excellent character of the girl."

"Do you love her, Juliette?"

"Saint-Fond, I don't love anything. I am moved by caprice only."

"Meseems this pretty creature lacks absolutely nothing of what is needed to make a delicious victim; undeniably she is beautiful, 'tis quite certain she would be yet more so in distress. . . . But if I take her," he added, "I'll pay you well, I'll pay you a better price for her than for another, since I desire her."

"To my understanding, does not that word have the meaning and force of a command? Wouldst have her come in this instant?"

Saint-Fond, flinging a dressing-robe about himself, sprang towards Palmire as she came into the room and,

taking her firmly by the arm, disappeared with her into another chamber: lengthy, arduous was the séance; I could hear Palmire's screams. An hour elapsed before they returned. As he had made her undress before leading her off to that secret lair, the first thing that caught my eye when she reappeared was the extent to which she had been mistreated; and even if her body had not been naked, the tears still coursing down her cheeks would have been sufficient evidence.

"Juliette," declared her tormentor, visibly overwrought by what he had just accomplished, "it breaks my heart but I simply do not have enough time for this, which means I'll not be able to amuse myself with this girl in the manner I'd like. Not today at least. So this is my suggestion. Have her present the day after tomorrow at our next three-girl supper. Until then, prison her safely in the darkest and best barred of your dungeon cells; I forbid you to allow her any nourishment or drink, and order you to fetter her so closely to the wall she will be able neither to sit down nor even to stir. Do not question her about what has just now passed; I have my own reasons for preferring to keep you in ignorance thereabout. For this Palmire you will receive double the customary fee. Farewell."

I had a great fondness for Palmire. Very loath I was to surrender her to that cannibal; but could I disobey? Daring not even to speak to her, I had her taken off to the dungeon; and scarcely was she there than two sentiments assailed me. The first was a desire to save this girl, of whom I was still far from being weary; the second revolved around an extreme curiosity to discover just how Saint-Fond proceeded with women upon whom he pronounced capital sentence. Ceding to this latter desire, I was about to start down to interrogate the captive when a servant ushered in Mme. de Clairwil.

Several days earlier she had seen the Minister and learned from him the time of his return from the country; and now she had come to ask whether I would not care to drive back with her to Paris and to see a charming ballet at the Opera. I embraced my friend most warmly; I related to her all we had lately achieved, Saint-Fond and I; the follies I'd committed before the

Minister's arrival, I spoke also of them, and of all the others that had ensued. The dear creature found my stories delicious and congratulated me upon the progress I was beginning to make in crime. When I alluded to what was afoot regarding Palmire, Clairwil raised a cautioning hand.

"Juliette," said she, "beware. Banish all thoughts of cheating the Minister of his victim, and above all of prying into his obscure ways; be rather mindful that your fate depends upon this man, and that the pleasure you might derive from discovering his secret, or from preserving your slut's life, will never console you for the woes that will unfailingly beset you do you act the fool. You'll find ten score girls worth more than this one; and as for Saint-Fond's secret, knowledge of one piece of infamy more or less is not going to make you happier. Let's dine, my beloved, and then hasten back to the city; it will distract you."

By six o'clock we were en route, Clairwil, Elvire, Montalme and I; the team of six English horses had us moving swift as the wind and we would surely have arrived in time for the opening of the ballet, when but a little out of the village of Arcueil we met with four men, they were mounted and had pistols in their hands. Night had fallen. Our lackeys, effeminate, craven fellows, fops almost, ran off as fast as their legs could carry them, and, save only for the two coachmen, we were left to confront the four masked riders alone.

Clairwil, who knew not the meaning of fear, singled out him who looked to be the ringleader and, addressing him in an imperious tone, demanded what he fancied he was about; not a word did he reply. Our drivers were ordered to turn the coach about, we proceeded back aways in the direction of Arcueil, then climbed to Cachan and swung off into a narrow road which at length brought us to a lonely fortified castle. The coach entered, the gates closed, we even heard them being barricaded from within; thereupon one of our escorts opened the door of the coach and silently offered his hand, inviting us to step out.

My knees buckled as I got down from the coach, I was nigh to fainting away, for indeed I was dreadfully

afraid; my women were in no better shape; only Clairwil was undaunted. Head high, lips compressed, she bade us take courage. Three of our ravishers disappeared; their captain led us into a well-lit drawing room. There, our eyes were greeted by the sight of an old man: he was weeping, and two very pretty young ladies were endeavoring to console him.

"Mesdames, these persons fathered here," quoth our guide, who had now been rejoined by his three fellows, "are all that remain of the Cloris family. The old gentleman is the father of the husband, these two ladies are the sisters of his wife, and we are his brothers. The head of this house, his wife and daughter too, are missing; false charges were brought against them, through no fault of their own they incurred Her Majesty's displeasure and, worse yet, the wrath of that Minister who owes his place and fortune to none other than my brother's generosity and aid. Enquiries we rapidly made let us to the conviction, that these three persons, of whom there has been nothing heard since the day before yesterday, are being held prisoner, or are dead, in the country house you left this same evening. You belong to the Minister; one of you is his mistress, this we know. You shall either guide us to the recovery of the three we seek, or persuade us that they are no longer alive; until then, you shall remain our hostages. Restore our relatives to us and you go free; but if they have been murdered, then you shall be with them in the grave very shortly, and your shades shall implore theirs for forgiveness. Beyond this we have nothing to say to you; now 'tis your turn to speak. Be quick."

"Messieurs," answered the brazen Clairwil, "it would appear to me that these your doings are in every sense profoundly illegal. I would also qualify them as exceedingly clumsy. For consider: to begin with, it is likely that two women, madame and myself—these others are our servants—is it at all likely, I say, that two women be so well acquainted with the Minister's intimate affairs as to have any knowledge of such happenings as you refer to? Do you really suppose that if the persons in question have fallen into disgrace at Court, and that Justice or the Minister have been called upon to take

action; do you honestly believe that we would have been made witness to any such execution? Gentlemen, no, we do declare to you that we have never even heard tell of these people until now, and if you are just men, and have no more to say to us, put us at our liberty this instant, for it is against our will you detain us here, and you have not the right to do so."

"We shall not amuse yourselves refuting you, madame," our guide replied. "One of you has been four days upon the Minister's estate, the other arrived there late this afternoon. It was also four days ago the Cloris family entered that same house; of you two, one is most assuredly in a position to answer the questions I have posed, and you have neither of you any chance of being released until we are fully enlightened."

Whereupon the three other horsemen declared that since we were not eager to speak of our own free will, there were ways of extracting information from us by force.

"Ah my sons, that I would not have," said the old man, "no violence shall be done here. We must eschew our enemies' means lest we be likewise guilty of an evil. We shall merely request these ladies to compose a letter to the Minister, asking him to come to this house forthwith; and the message may be so styled as to give him the impression that they, and they alone, are soliciting his presence for business of the greaest urgency. He will come; we shall question him; he will finally have no choice but to tell us where my son and daughter are: for if he refuses, this hand, trembling though it is, shall find the strength to thrust a knifepoint into his heart. Wicked abuses of tyranny! Dire results of despotism! O people of France, when shall you rise up against the horrors? Put pen and ink and paper before these ladies and let them write."

"Keep them amused," I whispered to Clairwil, "occupy their attentions and leave the letter to me."

This was the text: "An affair of the very extremest importance necessitates your presence here; the bearer of this note will guide you, come with the utmost dispatch."

I submit the letter to our captors, they approve it. While addressing the envelope I find a moment to

scribble this postcript: "Rush hither *in force,* else we're lost; 'tis *perforce* the foregoing is indicated." The missive is sealed, one of the brothers leaves with it, and we are introduced into a room in an upper storey; the door is bolted, and another brother stands guard without.

No sooner were we alone than I told Clairwil what I had appended to the letter.

She shook her head. "That does not suffice to set my mind at rest," said she. "For if he comes here in force, these people have but to see that force and our throats are cut. What if we try to seduce our jailer?"

"We'll fail," I replied. "These aren't hired thugs. Bound by honor, not to mention ties of blood, nothing will dissuade them from seeking their revenge. Ah Clairwil, it does indeed seem to me that I have not yet got firm grasp of our principles, for in truth I do greatly fear lest some fatality or other, call it how you will, shall see virtue triumph in the end."

"Never. Never. Victory goes always to the stronger, and for strength crime has not its match. Such ideas betray an unpardonable weakness in you."

"This is my first reverse—"

"Your second, Juliette. Let me refresh your memory: only after you emerged from a prison where you ought rather to have gone to the gallows, did fortune begin to heap her favors upon you."

"True. I'd forgot that adventure."

"And its moral. Take courage, Juliette; be patient."

Nothing under the sun could have extinguished the fires of libertinage that burned at all times in this remarkable woman. There was but one bed in the room, and would you believe it? she suggested we all four of us get into it until Saint-Fond's arrival. But as it turned out, neither I nor either of my women was in a sufficiently composed state to cooperate in her extravagances; and so we chatted instead as we awaited further developments.

Like Clairwil, M. de Saint-Fond considered that, we being prisoners there, it were wiser not to storm the château; under such circumstances, the employ of ruse, he felt, ought to precede that of violence, and this was the stratagem he used.

The rider who had gone out with our letter returned

with two youths unknown to us; they brought Cloris' father a message, it ran as follows:

"To hold women in an affair concerning men only is not befitting to gallantry. Free these ladies; in their stead, accept as hostages these young men, one my first cousin, the other my nephew; you may believe that their safety is more precious to me than that of the women now in your power. As well, put aside all fear regarding your own loved ones; they are indeed under detention, but here at my house in Paris; consider me responsible for them; and I vow to you they shall be in your midst within the space of three days. Again I say to you, keep my kinsmen and let the women go their way; I myself shall be at your house four hours after this reaches you."

Here we had to use our wits very cleverly. The note was not read out to us, it was not until later we learned its exact contents; for the moment we could only guess its drift.

"Are you acquainted with these young gentlemen?" old Cloris asked me.

"Most certainly," said I, "they are related to the Minister; if they have come to substitute themselves for us, you couldn't have better hostages."

They were discussing whether to set us at large or no when one of our captors spoke up: "This may be a trap; whatever, I am against letting the women out of our hands. Why not keep them all? That means two hostages the more."

To this the others agreed, and the fools (for pursuant to the design of things, virtue can lead nowhere but to folly), the stupid clods, the animals shut us all inside the same room.

"Be reassured, mesdames," said one of the Minister's alleged relatives, "we are here to help you. Those are our instructions; two hours from now, the entire body of the Paris police—to which we belong—shall have the château surrounded: we shall protect you during the siege. We are well armed, never fear; and were these people, finding they have been tricked, to decide to attempt anything against you, you shall be defended."

"My one fear," Clairwil remarked, "is that these

idiots wake up to the fact they have made a mistake in putting us all together. We shall be helpless if they separate us."

"Very well," said I, much more at ease than I had been hitherto, "we have simply to unite ourselves inseparably."

"My stars," Clairwil declared, "you who but a moment ago shuddered at the mention of a roughly similar distraction, do you now dare broach the idea?"

"Why, I've grown much calmer," I replied, "and forsooth, Clairwil, these two lads are both very pretty to look upon."

One of them, Pauli by name, was in truth but twenty-three, and he had the gentlest face, the most delicate features in the world; the other was probably two years older, his appearance was effeminate but he was quite as handsome.

"I am confident that these gentlemen are at our disposition," said Clairwill; whereupon we fell to kissing our champions and caressing them with such ardor that we were soon able to read consent in their expressions.

"Yes," Clairwil resumed, "since they are so emphatically of our mind, this is how the thing should be gone about. Pauli, take Juliette; I'll be served by Laroche."

A brief moment later we heard gunfire outside; we all sprang up from the bed.

"They've come," says Clairwil; "give us pistols so that we can defend ourselves, my lads."

"Here you are," says Laroche. "Each is loaded with three balls."

"Good," Clairwil replies.

The noise mounts, shouts ring out in the château: "To arms!"

"See to the priming," cries Laroche; "you ladies had best group yourselves behind us, we can act as a shield for you."

Things now began to happen very fast. Already driven back from the lower part of the château by the detachment sent from Paris, our captors raced up towards where we were, meaning to kill us before surrendering; but their assailants were hot on their heels. Our door was forced; the pistol shots were deafening. Stationed be-

hind our defenders, this was the moment we chose for ridding ourselves of the weight of gratitude. Two bodies lay in a welter of blood at our feet. Their deaths were of course ascribed to our captors; the officers in charge of our detachment lost little time revenging their murdered comrades. Old Cloris and the young ladies alone remained alive: they were packed into a coach and, escorted by six constables, were taken off to the Bastille. The rest of the police, having hitched the horses to our carriage, conducted us to my house, where I besought Clairwil to stay for supper.

She agreed to do so; we scarce had seated ourselves in the drawing room than my butler announced Saint-Fond.

I turned quickly to my friend. "Shall we tell him about our little horror?"

"No." She pursed her lips. "You must always do whatever you want. You must never tell all you've done."

The Minister entered, we declared ourselves thankful for the measures he had taken in our behalf. He in his turn declared that he was very sorry indeed a personal affair of his had caused us such inconvenience.

"Eight men were killed in the course of the thing, perhaps ten," he informed us, "among them the two lads I sent to you. It's rather a pity about them."

"Tush," she chided, "is this Saint-Fond we hear expressing pity?"

"Merely regret at their loss. They were nimble boys, and wonderfully serviceable in my covert operations."

"Never mind, there are many pebbles on the beach," said I, showing Saint-Fond to his chair at table; let's forget about the slight harm that's been done and talk instead about your successes."

During the meal the conversation as usual revolved around philosophical questions; afterwards, the Minister, having business to attend to, and we being exceedingly tired after a trying day, the company separated.

The following two months were unattended by any event worth signaling. I had just celebrated my eighteenth birthday when, Saint-Fond, visiting me at home one morning, told me he had been to see Mme. de Cloris' sisters at the Bastille; they were both, he considered, far prettier than she; and indeed the younger of

the two, who was my age, struck him as positively lovely.

"So, my lord," quoth I, "shall it be a trip into the country?"

"Yea, verily," was his reply.

"And the old man?"

"Oh, some spice in his soup perhaps—"

"As you like, but that will mean the loss of three prisoners at one stroke, and you realize that the warden depends entirely upon them for his livelihood."

"He won't go hungry. Replacements are easy to come by."

"I should like you to put one of Clairwil's parents first on the list. The creature in question has been playing the prude with our friend, to whose libertinage she has some strange objection. That leaves two vacancies to fill; I have candidates for them now, I'll give you their names in a week."

"I'll have the documents in order," said the Minister, "but one thing at a time." He drew out a memorandum book and penciled a note: "Gentlemen: lunch. Ladies: outing." Whereupon he looked up at me and smiled. "Off you go tomorrow, Juliette. Take Clairwil along; she's charming, and for imaginativeness has no peer. We'll contrive something delicious."

"Shall you require men and aggressive lesbians?"

"No, I think not. Private scenes are sometimes preferable to orgies; the narrower stage is more favorable to meditation, more conducive to horrors. And in cozier surroundings one is less apt to be shy."

"Two women to assist at least?"

"Two women well on in years; find me a pair in their sixties, it's a caprice. I've many times been assured that nothing is quite so stimulating as natural decrepitude; this might be the occasion to try some of that."

An hour later I was in conference with Clairwil. "I have only one suggestion to make," said she after I had sketched the Minister's project. "Those young ladies doubtless have lovers, favorites at any rate; we must locate them, make off with them, and include them in the festivities: these situations ordinarily afford any number of possibilities."

I hasten to the Minister's residence, report Clairwil's idea to him; it meets with his approval; the date of the party is postponed a week; and a hunt for the lovers is got under way.

He finally learns that the younger, Mademoiselle Faustine, is in love with a young man by the name of Dormon, of the same age as she; whilst her sister, Mademoiselle Felicity, who is twenty-eight, has given her heart to one Delnos, a year or two her senior and renowned throughout Paris for his good looks. Four days sufficed to have these young men behind bars, the charges leveled against them were somewhat vague and altogether false but because never seriously examined, more than sufficient in an age when the abuses of privilege and influence were such that even the valets of high-placed personages were in the habit of jailing just about whomever they liked. These latest victims lay but a night in the Bastille; they were conveyed the next to my country domain whence the young ladies had been brought the previous day. Clairwil and I received our guests as they arrived and locked them away, but in separate chambers; so that, though they were all lodged under the same roof, none of them could suspect he had his beloved for neighbor.

After an enormous dinner we removed to a drawing room where all stood in readiness. Garbed as Roman matrons, the two sexagenarians were awaiting orders. Saint-Fond, impressed by Clairwil's magnificent ass, wished to render it homage before doing anything else.

"And now to work," says the Minister.

"Saint-Fond," Clairwil says, "I have two boons to ask you. You have a notable capacity for cruelty. Pray exercise it to the full, my dear, that is my first request. The second is that you enable me to exercise mine: torturing males is still my favorite pastime; you enjoy tormenting persons of my sex, I am equally fond of making representatives of yours suffer, and from martyrizing these two pretty fellows I expect to derive no less satisfaction, and possibly even more, than you will reap from their two mistresses."

"Clairwil, you are a monster."

"I know I am, my dear; and the one thing that mortifies me is to have to own myself outdone by you every day."

Saint-Fond declaring his desire to see each of the four lovers in turn, one of the old attendants brought in Dormon, he whose mistress was Faustine.

"Young man," Clairwil began, "you are standing before your master, therefore see to it that the most complete submissivness characterize your behavior and a most scrupulous truthfulness your replies; it is in his lordship's hands that lies your life."

"Alas," the unhappy one replied, "there is truly nothing that I have to say, madame. As to what I could have done to merit arrest I have not the faintest notion, nor can I understand why I am become the victim of fate."

Clairwil was devouring him with her eyes. "Were you not to wed Faustine?"

"My whole heart and soul were set on making mine the happiness of having her to be my wife."

"You know nothing of the dreadful affair her family was implicated in?"

"Verily, madame, of her family I know nothing but what was seemly and decent and virtuous; could vice exist there whence Faustine came?"

"Bah," said I, "he prates like a hero out of a novel."

"I shall always be loyal friend to virtue."

"Youthful enthusiasm therefore," Clairwil advanced, "has proved the undoing of a good many persons like yourself. But we are here concerned with other matters; the object of this interview is to inform you that Faustine is in this house. The Minister is disposed to enjoy her; he trusts you are disposed to cede her favors; in exchange for which concession she will be pardoned and so will you."

"I seek no pardon since I have done no wrong," was the young man's proud reply.

"So be it. Ass, madame, give me ass," cried Saint-Fond in a veritable lather, "'tis plain indeed we'll reach no understanding with this stubborn little scapegrace, else we use violence."

At which Clairwil and the two hags leapt upon the

young man, and had him pinioned and naked in the twinkling of an eye.

"Ah," said Dormon, gazing about him in distress as he realized what infamies lay in store for him, "ah, I've been tricked. I am amongst monsters."

"Your surmise, sir," said Clairwil, "is quite correct, and experience will soon confirm it."

And after some preliminary abominations I was requested to fetch in Faustine. Beauty, shapeliness, sweet candor, all that invites, these she had in rare degree; and when she beheld the scene in the room, oh how the modesty in her made her other qualities shine! Espying her lover, whom Clairwil and Saint-Fond were caressing industriously, the girl came near to fainting away.

"Be easy, sweet angel," I said, taking her hand, "be of good cheer, we're swimming in dirt and nastiness and joy, my dove; like us shamelessly, you're going to bare your wondrous ass; and you'll see 'tis not unpleasant."

"But—but what is all this? Oh merciful heavens, where am I? Who are you?"

"Your host is his lordship, the Minister, your uncle and friend: your case is in his hands. 'Tis a difficult case, yea, a very grave case; however, be patient, be considerate and everything will come out well."

"And you," she said in a faltering voice, addressing Dormon, "you have been capable—"

"Oh," he murmured, casting down his eyes, "like you I have had to submit to force. But," he went on, lifting his head, "while this is the day of our dishonor, there may soon come another that shall see us revenged."

"Enough of this frightful comic opera rubbish, young man," quoth Saint-Fond, applying a vigorous thwack to the glib boy's bare hindquarters, "better employ your fiery eloquence to persuade mademoiselle here to lend herself to my caprices, and they shan't be mild. She's going to be sore tried."

Whereat tears began to flow from Faustine's glorious eyes, she uttered groans, cruel Saint-Fond, approached and stared at her from close on.

Clairwil's main passion, as I have said, did not consist in vexing women; they were men upon whom she

preferred to expend her greatest cruelty, whereof Nature had given her no small fund. However, though she might now and then refrain from inflicting pain, even upon a person of the opposite sex, she always relished watching others in action; and, with wicked curiosity she observed all the outrages poor Faustine was being made to endure; more, she suggested further ones.

"Well now," Saint-Fond said, "we must unite those who were so soon to have been bound together in marital bliss. Far be it from me," he added, "to deny this young gentleman one of his pretty mistress' two maidenheads. Clairwil, dispose the male, I'll prepare the female.

"Still, you know, I like her that way," said Saint-Fond; "I've never cared much about seeing pleasure's lineaments writ over a woman's countenance. They're too equivocal, too unsure; I prefer the signs of pain, which are more dependable by far."

Not only was the operation a stunning success, but, instead of sighs of ecstasy, it drew piercing screams from the girl whom never before had such a dart penetrated, and who seemed as though firmly set against enjoying the experience, generally longed for, that makes a woman of the maid.

"Hear me, young man," said Saint-Fond. "I am about to require something most extraordinary of you, and which I venture to suppose you will consider most barbarous. Be that as it may, your mistress is doomed unless you obey instructions. I am going to have your beloved secured to this column here, you will take this bundle of switches, and with them you will flay her ass."

"Monster! Can you propose—"

"Then you prefer to see her killed?"

"Why must it be, that I have no choice between this infamy and the loss of her whom I cherish above all others in the world?"

"A hard alternative surely, and such as the weak have everyday to face," said I. "You are helpless, hence you must yield: do as you are bid, do it at once, or a dagger goes into your mistress' heart."

The great art of Saint-Fond consisted in always plac-

ing his victims in such a situation that of two evils they had inevitably to elect the one which more nicely suited his perfidious libertinage. Trembling Dormon neither agrees nor refuses; his silence speaks.

"O sir, for the love of God, I could never—"

"Nonsense, my boy, of course you can." Threats follow sardonic cajolery. But how reluctantly! And how timidly. Saint-Fond is obliged to guide his arm. Dormon lays on somewhat more energetically . . . then collapses in a swoon.

"Embrace your intended," said my lover as he untied some of Dormon's bonds, leaving intact those which secured his hands; "kiss her, my lad, and then show your mettle: she'll have her eyes upon you throughout your ordeal."

Then, as was his custom, he led the powerless young man off, they were encloseted for an hour together; we could only suppose that the libertine took this opportunity to impart some deep secret to his victim, to whom, as it were, he entrusted the mission of carrying it with him into the next world.

"What can be going on in there?" Clairwil demanded, annoyed at having to wait and glancing impatiently at the door to the chamber.

"I have no idea," said I, "but such is my eagerness to find out, I would be almost willing to sacrifice our relationship—"

Dormon emerged. After him came Saint-Fond, savagery glinted in his every feature, in his twisted lips, his dilating nostrils, his wickedly narrowed eyes; clutching one of his victim's buttocks, he steered him towards us.

"Come along, come along," said Clairwil, visibly pleased at seeing Dormon in such condition, "come along, my little clown, let's waste no more time." Turning to Saint-Fond, "We are short on men," the diabolical creature observed."

Clairwil seized Dormon by both ears. "Kiss me, little fool, while there's still something left of your pretty face."

"My friends," quoth Clairwil, "you will be good enough to allow me to choose the torture for our last victim."

At this we all laughed right merrily; arrangements were completed during the interview, no detail was neglected.

Clairwil was mightily curious to learn Saint-Fond's secret; she plied him with wine, she caressed and praised him till he was quite giddy; then she put the question: "What is it you do with your victims just prior to killing them?"

"Why force me to reveal it?"

"Ought you to keep secrets from us?" I asked my lover.

"In truth it's no secret," said he.

"You hide it from us, however. Pray tell us what it is."

"What purpose would that serve?"

"It would satisfy our curiosity, and we are the two best friends you have in the world."

"You are cruel women," said he, and he sighed. "Don't you realize that I cannot make this confession without acknowledging a dreadful weakness in me, a veritably unavowable paltriness?"

"You can afford to divulge it to us."

We redoubled our pleas and flatteries, our caresses and seductions conquered, the Minister waved us to our chairs and addressed us in this wise:

"If 'tis true, I say to myself, that there are punishments and rewards in the next world, the victims of my wickedness will triumph, they will know bliss. My desire is to make its sufferings last beyond the unending immensity of ages; such has been my desire, and had been for a long time when I broached it to a famous libertine whom I was greatly attached to in days bygone, and whose tastes were the same as mine. He was a man of vast knowledge, his attainments in alchemy and astrology were especially noteworthy; he assured me that I was very correct indeed in my suspicion, that there are punishments and rewards to come; and that, in order to bar the victim from celestial joys, it were necessary to have him sign a pact, writ in his heart's blood, whereby he contracted his soul to the devil. His agonies, in identical kind to those you make him endure while burying the pact, shall be everlasting; and yours will be the unspeakable delight of prolonging them beyond the limits of eternity, if eternity there be."

"And so that is what you do to your victims?"

"Softly, Clairwil, berate me not. You wanted nothing so much as to learn the truth. It is a weakness you wheedled me into disclosing. I am not proud of it."

"No, nor should you be. Why Saint-Fond, I am amazed! I thought you were a philosopher. You have a mind, do you not?"

"Clairwil, do you not understand that my divine hope must fade away unless founded upon such an opinion as I entertain?"

"I do very well understand, my good man, that if you have to edify your divine hopes upon fables, it were better to give them up; for the day may come when the harm belief in fables has done you will prove to outweigh the pleasures you have received therefrom. Come, come, Saint-Fond: be content with the evil you can work in this world, and abandon your foolish schemes for perpetuating it forever."

"If all men are equal in the eyes of who made them, why are they not all in agreement as to the particular crimes which are to cost man this everlasting suffering?"

"More of a philosopher than you, Clairwil, I see *Eternal and Universal Evil* as absolutely indispensable in the world. *Evil* is, however, a moral entity, and not a created one, an eternal and not a perishable entity: it existed before the world; it constituted the monstrous, the execrable Being who was able to fashion such a curious world. It will hence exist after the creatures which people this world; it is unto *evil* they will all enter again, in order to re-create others perhaps more wicked yet, and that is why they say all is degraded, all is corrupted in old age; that stems only from the perpetual re-entry and emergence of wicked elements into and out of the matrix of *maleficent molecules.*"

"That," replied Clairwil, "is the most astonishing, the most unusual, I dare say the most bizarre of all the systems yet to have occurred to the mind of man."

"There you are," Saint-Fond rejoined, "always that perfidious egoism which is the course of all the mistakes human beings make. One arranges one's schemes according to one's tastes and whims, and always by drifting

farther from truth. You've got to leave your passions behind when you examine a philosophical doctrine."

"Ah, Saint-Fond," said Clairwil, "how easy it would be to point out that yours is nothing but the product of those passions which you would have one put by when studying. With less cruelty in your heart your dogmas would be less sanguinary, and you yourself would rather risk the eternal damnation of which you speak than renounce the delicious pleasure of horrifying others with it."

"Exactly!' I interrupted; "that is his single motive for exposing his doctrine; nothing but wickedness on his part, but he won't believe it."

"I believe you are wrong: and you see perfectly well that my actions correspond in every point to my manner of thinking: convinced that the torture of being reunited with *maleficent molecules* will be quite mild for the person as maleficent as they, I cover myself with crimes in this world so as to have less to suffer in the next."

"As for me," retorted Clairwil, "I soil myself with them because they please me, because I believe them one of the ways of serving Nature, and because, since nothing of me is going to survive, it matters bloody little how I behave in this world."

Thus far had we come in our conversation when we heard a carriage enter the courtyard and stop; Noirceuil was announced, then introduced. With him he brought a youth of sixteen; never had I clapped eyes on one so fair.

"Bless me," murmured the Minister, "I've only this minute finished giving these ladies an analysis of hell; could it be that my dear Noirceuil arrives to tempt me into meriting it a little?"

"'Tis only too true," Noirceuil returned; "methinks ye might damn yourself wondrously at this pretty little chap's expense, I fetched him hither for that very purpose. He is the son of my lord the Marquis de Rose, the same whom last week you went to the Bastille upon charges—what were they? of plotting against the Crown?"

"That was the pretext, as I recall."

"And your aim, presumably, was to procure yourself this boy and perhaps some money besides?"

"Precisely."

"Then I was not mistaken. At any rate the Marquise, knowing of our connections, sought audience with me; I had one of your clerks draw up a writ, and this morning she and I had a chat together. Here's the result of our negotiations," Noirceuil said, thrusting young Rose into the Minister's arms, "I've also a hundred thousand *écus* to turn over to you."

"He's pretty," said Saint-Fond, kissing the lad, "exceedingly pretty; but he comes at a bad moment . . . I'm exhausted."

"Tush," Noirceuil replied, "the boy has all the qualities needed to restore you to life, of that I'm certain."

Rose and Noirceuil, who had not yet taken supper, joined us at table. Saint-Fond said, when the meal was over, that he wished to have me on hand while he amused himself with the fellow, and proposed that Noirceuil lie with Clairwil, both of whom seemed pleased by the arrangement; and the company retired.

"I fear I shall have to put you to contribution," Saint-Fond declared, "for attractive though this boy undeniably is, I foresee I'll have trouble stiffening. Unbutton him for me, my pet, roll his shirt above his waist, and, that's it, leave his breeches hanging just above his knees, quite, that's the style I adore."

"O Juliette," he confided to me, smacking his lips, "food for the gods that. I thrive upon no other."

Then instructing the boy to get into bed and to await us without falling asleep, Saint-Fond conducted me to his boudoir.

Noirceuil and Clairwil, waiting for us, took breakfast together; we joined them in due time. Everything of what had passed remained a secret between the Minister and me. Clairwil and I returned thither in her carriage.

Concerning this adventure, my friends, I have nothing further to tell you that you have not already taken for granted: the crime, like all Saint-Fond's crimes, was crowned with great success: he very shortly came into possession of a legacy which proved every bit as valuable as

he had originally estimated; and a million *livres*, representing two years of his new income, was the gift he had the kindness to present me for my help in obtaining it.

On the road going up to the capital, Clairwil posed me several questions; I managed to elude them. To be sure, I spoke of our lewd activities—there would have been no point attempting to conceal them, she would not have believed me had I denied them—; but as for the rest, I hid it all, which was according to Saint-Fond's wishes. During that journey I took the opportunity to remind my friend of her promise to secure my admission to her libertine club; she gave me her word that I would be received the next time it met; we entered the city, kissed, and said goodbye.

# TOME III

My friends, it is time I tell you a little about myself, and above all describe my opulence, fruit of the most determinedly dissolute living, in order that you be able to contrast it with the state of adversity wherein my sister, who had chosen good behavior, was languishing already. Your outlook and philosophy will suggest to you what conclusions are to be drawn from these comparisons.

I lived on a grand scale, on a perfectly enormous scale; you must surely have suspected as much, what with the expenses I had to make in behalf of my lover. But leaving aside the innumerable things required for his pleasure, I had to myself a superb town house in Paris, an exquisite property by Sceaux, at Barrière-Blanche, as delightful a little dwelling as ever you saw, twelve lesbians were perpetually in my train, four equally engaging chambermaids, a reader, a night nurse, three carriages, ten horses, four valets chosen for their virility and excellence in the member, all the other appurtenances of a very great household, and after salaries and upkeep

had been deducted I was left with a balance of two millions to throw away on trifles of one kind or another. You will concede, I believe, that something is to be said for the way I had managed my affairs.

I rose every day at ten. Until eleven I saw nobody except intimate friends; from then until one, my toilette, at which all my retinue assisted; promptly at one o'clock I gave private audience to those individuals who came to solicit my favors, or to the Minister when he happened to be in Paris. At two I hied myself to Barrière-Blanche where, every day, I would find awaiting me what had been delivered by tasteful and conscientious procuresses, to wit: four new men, and four new women, with whom I would very wantonly, very amply indulge my caprices. To obtain some idea of the objects I used to receive there, you have only to know that not one of them cost me less than twenty-five *louis,* and I frequently paid double that; nor is there any imagining what of the delicious and rare was made me purveyance in either sex; at those trysts I more than once met women and girls of rank and the highest station; sweet were the joys, yes, elaborate were the pleasures I tasted in that house. I would return to town at four in the afternoon, and always dine with friends. I shall not speak of my board: nowhere in Paris was there anything to match it for splendor, for delicacy, for profusion; and yet I was a hard mistress to my cooks and wine steward, demanding that they ever outdo themselves; but I need not press the point, you are familiar enough with my extreme intemperance. 'Tis perhaps a mild vice, gourmandism; 'tis one of my favorites nonetheless; for I have always been of the opinion, that unless you carry this one to excess, you can never properly enjoy the others. After these royal repasts I used to go out to the theatre; or else entertain the Minister if it was one of his evenings.

Regarding my wardrobe, my gems, my furniture and my savings, though at this period I had been scarcely two years with M. de Saint-Fond, I believe four millions would be a low figure for the value of the lot; I had half that sum in cash, and used sometimes to fling up the lids of my treasure-chests and masturbate frenziedly: *I love crime, and see!* I would gloat, *see, here at my dis-*

*posal are all the means I need for committing it.* Did I desire a new piece of jewelry, another dress, anything, and my lover—who disliked having me wear the same thing more than twice—would satisfy me immediately; and in return for all that nothing was required of me save lawless conduct, lechery, libertinage, and prodigious care in arranging the Minister's frolicks. 'Twas thus that by flattering my tastes I found them gratified every one; through my surrender to every sensual irregularity my senses were kept in a constant drunken exhilaration. But such comforts, such joys—what was my moral situation as a result of them? Ah, of this I am reluctant to speak, and yet forsooth I must. The terrific libertinage I practiced day in and day out had so rusted and decayed the workings of my soul, to such a degree had I been envenomed by the pernicious advice, the vicious examples I was fairly deluged with from all sides and all the time, that I declare to you, I do not think I'd have given a penny out of my board to rescue someone on the brink of starvation. Indeed, round this time a dreadful famine broke out in the vicinity of my country home; all the folk in those parts were reduced to the very worst distress; I recall hideous scenes, girls sold their bodies by the roadside, waifs were abandoned, there were several suicides; droves of people came begging to my door; I held firm, and deliberately and impudently reasserted my uncharitable disposition by laying out fabulous sums for the improvement of my lawns and shrubberies. But how can one possibly bestow alms, was my insolent rejoinder, when one is in the midst of having mirrored boudoirs built in one's park, and one's paths beautified by scultpured Cupids, Aphrodites and Sapphos? Everything that could move a heart of stone was exhibited to my tranquil gaze; it got them nowhere, steadfast I remained: weeping mothers, naked infants, ghostlike figures wasted by hunger, I simply smiled, shook my head, and throughout those trying months slept as soundly as ever before and ate with an increased appetite. Taking stock of my sensations, I discovered that what I was feeling perfectly bore out my teachers' predictions: instead of a disagreeable sentiment of pity, there was kindled inside me a certain restlessness, a commotion produced

by the evil I fancied I was doing in turning those wretches away empty-handed, and within my nerves there was a certain rush of heat much like the blaze ignited in us whenever we violate a law or subdue a prejudice. I suddenly recognized how delightful putting these principles into practice could be; and I understood, that if the spectacle of misery caused by unkind fate can be sublimely voluptuous for those with minds trained and enriched by such doctrines as had been inculcated in mine, then the spectacle of misery one has oneself been responsible for must surely intensify this pleasure; as you know, mine is a fertile imagination, it now began to run riot. The logic of the thing was eminently simple: I reaped pleasure merely from denying to the destitute the wherewithal that would have brought them respite; ah, what might I not experience from being the direct and sole cause of that destitution? If, said I, if it is sweet to refuse to do good, it must be heavenly to do evil. I summoned up this idea, played with it during those critical moments when the flesh catches fire from the sparks emitted by an excited brain; moments when one is particularly apt to heed the voice of desires become that much more strident, that much more imperious with the receding into unimportance, and finally into nullity, of all else. The dream once dreamt and over, one may subside again into produce and sobriety—it requires little or no effort.

At last came the time appointed for my reception into Clairwil's club. Its name was The Sodality of the Friends of Crime. On the morning of that day my sponsor brought for my study a copy of the Sodality's bylaws; here, let me read them to you, I believe you will find them intriguing.

"The Sodality of the Friends of Crime,
"Its Statutes.

"Deferring to common usage, the Sodality admits the serviceability of the word *crime;* but makes plain declaration that in its employment thereof with reference to any kind of act of whatever sort or color, no condemnatory or pejorative sense is ever intended. Thoroughly

convinced that man is not free; and that, bound absolutely by the laws of Nature, all men are slaves of these fundamental laws.

"1. No distinction is drawn between the individuals who comprise the Sodality; not that it holds all men equal,—a vulgar notion deriving from infirmity, want of logic and false philosophy—but because it is persuaded and maintains, that distinctions of any kind may have a detrimental influence upon the Sodality's pleasures, and are certain sooner or later to spoil them.

"2. The Sodality dissolves all marital ties and ignores those of blood; under its roof one should disport indiscriminately with the wife of one's neighbor as with one's own, should for enjoyment consult one's own brother, sister, children, nephews, etc., of somebody else; and any unwillingness to comply with these rules constitutes strong grounds for exclusion.

"3. A husband is bound to present his wife for admission; a father, his son or daughter; a brother, his sister; an uncle, his nephew or niece; etc.

"4. Entry into the Sodality is barred to those unable to indicate a minimum yearly income of twenty-five thousand *livres,* dues of Membership being ten thousand francs per annum.

"5. Twenty artists and literary figures are to be admitted upon remittance of the modest fee of a thousand *livres* per annum; this special consideration is part of the Sodality's policy of patronizing the arts; it regrets that its means do not permit it to welcome, at this insignificant price, a larger number of these gifted persons to whom it would give every kind of encouragement.

"6. The Members of the Sodality, united through it into one great family, share all their hardships as they do their joys; they aid each other mutually in all life's various situations; but alms, charities, help extended to widows, orphans, or persons in distress are rigorously forbidden.

"7. An emergency fund of thirty thousand *livres* is kept in constant reserve, and is at the disposition of any Member who by accident or ill fate finds himself in difficulties of whatever sort.

"8. During those hours devoted to corporative frolick-

ing, all Members, male and female, are naked; they intermingle in the mêlée partners are chosen indiscriminately, and there is no such thing as a valid refusal whereby one individual would deny his pleasure to another. Once called upon, each individual must cooperate instantly, unreservedly, gladly; has he not the right to demand the same a few minutes later? Should an individual attempt to shirk his obligations towards his brethren, he will be forcefully constrained to fulfil them and then driven ignominiously out of the Sodality.

"9. Eating and drinking carried to any point of gluttony and drunkenness is authorized; every Member is assured of assistance while indulging in these as in other excesses; all possible measures are taken to facilitate them.

"10. Men over forty years of age, women over thirty-five are not received by the Sodality; once admitted however, no Member may be expelled on grounds of old age.

"11. Oaths, hard language and blasphemies in particular are authorized, they may be employed upon all occasions. Between Members the familiar *thou* is compulsory.

"12. Repulsive deformities or diseases will not be put up with. Someone so afflicted, were he to present himself, would most surely be rejected. And were an already admitted Member to fall prey to such misfortunes, he would be asked to resign.

"13. A Member who contracts the venereal malady will be obliged to retire until completely restored, his recovery being vouched for by the house Physician and Chirurgeons.

"14. No foreigner will be admitted; provincials are likewise debarred. The Sodality exists only for persons resident in Paris and its environs.

"15. High birth will in no wise facilitate admission; the essential is to prove one has the necessary means. However, a woman may be pretty she shall not be accepted unless she possess the required wealth; the same will apply to any young man, however handsome.

"16. Under no circumstances does the Sodality intrude or interfere in government affairs, nor may any Member. Political speeches are expressly forbidden.

"17. Among the facilities offered Sodality Members are two seraglios, they are located in the two wings of the main building. One is composed of three hundred boys ranging from seven to twenty-five years of age; the other of a like number of girls, from five to twenty-one. These creatures are constantly replaced, not a week goes by but at least thirty are winnowed out of each seraglio so as to make room for fresh accessions: close by is an establishment where new lots are trained up to fill gaps in the ranks. Sixty procuresses look after recruitment; and, has been said, there is a Warden for each seraglio. These harems are agreeable places, comfortably appointed; there, one does exactly what one likes; the most ferocious passions are exercised in these sanctuaries where all Sodality Members are admitted free of charge; however, a tax of one hundred crowns is levied per creature murdered. Those Members who choose to sup in a seraglio are at liberty to do so; entrance tickets are distributed by the President, who cannot refuse them to Members in good standing and who have accomplished their month as novices. The extremest subordination on the part of the inmates prevails in the seraglios; complaints relative to lack of submissiveness or of cooperation will be taken at once to the Warden of the seraglio, or to the President, and no time is lost chastising the miscreant, according to the plaintiff's specifications, and you have the right to inflict the penalty yourself, if such things amuse you. Although each seraglio contains creatures of only one sex, they may be mixed at will and to taste, males being fetched into the midst of females, or females into the midst of males. Inmates of the two seraglios may not be removed either to the pleasure halls or to a Member's personal residence. The lateral pavilions housing the seraglios contain menageries as well, where animals of every species await the Member given to bestiality; 'tis a simple passion and altogether natural, and must hence be respected like all the rest. Three complaints brought against any one creature suffice to have him removed. Three requests that he be put to death suffice to have him dispatched without further ado. In each seraglio are four executioners, four goalers, eight whippers, four flayers, four midwives, and four chirur-

geons all at the orders of Members who, in the heat of passion, might have need of the ministry of such personages; it being understood of course that the midwives and chirurgeons are present, not by any means to render humanitarian aid, but to assist in tortures. Directly a seraglio inmate manifests the slightest symptom of illness he is sent to the hospital, never again to return to the house. Each seraglio is surrounded on three sides by high walls. All the windows are barred, and the inmates remain indoors, always. Between the building and the high wall shielding it is a space ten feet wide, forming an alley bordered by cypress trees; Sodality Members sometimes take seraglio inmates for walks along this secluded pathway, to indulge with them in pleasures most somber and often still more frightful. At the foot of a number of these trees are holes, pits into which a victim may be made to disappear; suppers are held under these trees from time to time, and occasionally in these very pits: whereof some are extremely deep, descent into them being possible by means only of hidden stairways, and in the lower reaches of which one may accomplish every imaginable infamy, the same stillness, the same silence reigning there as in the uttermost bowels of the earth.

"18. No candidate will be admitted without first signing both the oath he will be made to repeat, and the list of obligations corresponding to his sex."

The time came to leave. I was adorned like the goddess of daylight; Clairwil, my sponsor, was in a gay mood and out of coquetry had dressed herself to look like a girl of fourteen. En route she reminded me of the extreme docility I was to show in the face of all the Sodality members' desires, and she also said that as regards the seraglios I would simply have to be patient for, as a novice, it would be a month before I could make use of them, no exception was ever allowed to the rules.

The house whither we were driving was in one of the bleakest and least populous quarters of Paris; it took nearly an hour to get there. My heart beat excitedly when our carriage entered a dark courtyard virtually enfenced by tall black trees, and the gates of which shut immediately we were inside. A servant was awaiting us

as we stepped from the carriage, and he escorted us into the hall. Clairwil was obliged to surrender her clothing; I however was to undress later, in the course of the ceremony.

I went in. 'Twas an exceedingly handsome woman of thirty-five who was presiding, she was nude, her coiffure was magnificent; those to her left and right where she sat on the platform of honor were naked also, they were two men and a woman. Over three hundred members had already arrived and there they were, all naked: not a sound was to be heard save the noises necessitated by the various circumstances. Some were strolling about in pairs, some alone; many were eyeing the crowd and while gazing at spectacles fingering themselves voluptuously. There were several groups, some of them composed of up to eight and even ten persons; many of men only; no fewer of women exclusively; of several women between two men; and of several men occupying two or three women. Extremely pleasant incense burned in great cassolettes, emitting heady vapours whose irresistible effect was a sort of sensual languor. I saw a trio emerge together from one of the latrines.

And then the President rose and in a quiet voice said that she would like to have the attention of the assembly for a moment. Activity soon ceased and a few minutes later I found myself surrounded by all the members present; never had I been so closely scrutinized nor by so many people; each delivered an opinion, and I believe I can assert that the view generally expressed was flattering; there was whispering, glances, nods were exchanged and 'twas clear all sorts of little plots were being hatched against me, and I shuddered at the thought that I was about to have to subject myself to all the desires roused by my mouth and my charms. At length the President bade me step up and stand on the dais opposite her; and there, a balustrade separating me from the very numerous company, I was upon her instructions divested of my raiments by two servants who in less time than it takes to tell had off every stitch I was wearing. When the servants withdrew and left me absolutely naked before the bold stares of those several hundred spectators, I was, I do admit, somewhat embarrassed; but that feeling was

short-lived, my impudence was restored at once by the applause I heard ring out. These, such as I shall recite them to you, were the questions the President put me; and my answers to them:

"Do you promise to live your whole life long in libertinage of the very extremest order?"

"I swear it."

"Do you esteem all lewd acts, whatsoever they be and including the most odious, to be simple and natural?"

"They are all as one to me, thus do I consider them."

"Would you commit each and every one of them if moved by the slightest desire?"

"I would indeed. All of them."

"Do you declare your intention to adhere strictly to the Sodality's statutes as they have been read out to you by your sponsor?"

"I do."

"And are you prepared to accept the penalties prescribed therein should you prove refractory?"

"I am."

"Swear it."

"I swear."

"Are you married?"

"No."

"Whipped?"

"Upon occasion."

"What is your name?"

"Juliette."

"Your age?"

"I am eighteen."

"Have you affairs with women?"

"Many times."

"Have you committed crimes?"

"A few."

"Stolen?"

"Yes."

"Attempted the life of a human being?"

"Aye, I have."

"Do you promise never to swerve from the path you have followed until now?"

"I do swear it."

Here a new burst of applause.

"Will you bring into the Sodality all those related to you by bonds of kinship?"

"I shall."

"Do you agree never to reveal the secrets of the Sodality?"

"I shall never reveal them, I swear it."

"Do you promise to exhibit the completest indulgence toward all the caprices and all the lewd whims of all Sodality members?"

"I promise it."

"Whom do you prefer, men or women?"

"I am very fond of women; I have a passion for men."

My naïveté brought forth a wave of laughter from the corporation.

"What think you of the lash?"

"I like to use it and to have it used upon me."

This reply was much appreciated also.

"And your attitude toward oral pleasures?"

"I adore them."

"Have you had offspring?"

"No, none."

"Do you intend to refrain from having them?"

"I shall do everything in my power to avoid them."

"You therefore dislike children?"

"I detest them."

"Has your sponsor with her the sum constituting your entrance fee?"

"Yes."

"Are you wealthy?"

"I am exceedingly well-to-do."

"And have you ever devoted any of your money to charity?"

"Of course not."

Clairwil handed the fee over to the Executive Secretary from whom in return she received a small brochure; I was instructed to read it aloud. This printed document was headed by the title "Instructions to Women Admitted into the Sodality of the Friends of Crime."

*From a drawer Mme. de Lorsange took an envelope, opened it. "I have kept the paper," said she, "for it is interesting. Listen to its contents.*

"The estate or condition into which she was born who is to sign these presents, this matters not in the least, she is a woman, and as such created for the pleasures of mankind. It were hence seeming to prescribe to her a mode of comportment which would enable her to make the rendering of her services advantageous to her purse and agreeable to her fleshly needs. We shall suppose her married. For those who, though unmarried, live nevertheless with a man whether as his mistress or as his whore, are bound by the very same chains as those who exist in wedlock's irons, and they will be able to employ the following recommendations to similar purpose, that is, the escaping from those chains or the lightening of them; wherefore not will be taken, that the word *man* as used here generically means lover, husband or keeper.

"Whatever be the man into whose clutches she falls, let her take care not to consider his proprietorship exclusive; fidelity, an infantile habit and romantic sentiment, can bring about nothing but the downfall of a woman, can be nothing but the cause of woes without end, and never the source of a single pleasure; and indeed, why should she be faithful, since, and she may be very sure of it, in all the world there is no such thing as a faithful man? It is ridiculous, is it not, that the more fragile, the weaker sex, the one forever open to every enticement into every pleasure, the one whose surrender thereto is authorized by daily and manifold seductions; absurd, is it not, that it should be this sex that resists temptation whilst the other has as means for evildoing nothing but his unaided solitary wickedness! And more, what's the use to a woman of her fidelity? If her man loves her truly, he must be of sufficient delicacy to tolerate all her failing, and even to share vicariously in the delights she procures herself, and to rejoice the ein; if he loves her not, a silly creature she who would be bounden utterly to someone who deceives her day in and day out; woman's infidelities, faults if you wish, are natural, those of a man proceed from his duplicity and his viciousness; the species of woman we have in mind, that is, a healthy and intelligent woman, will hence spurn no occasion to be unfaithful, rather, she

will seek such occasions and exploit them as often as possible, and to the full.

"Whatever the act of debauchery her man may propose to her, let her never balk; readiness and good will are her surest means for maintaining a hold over him she wishes to keep. A man soon wearies of a woman's favors; what happens if she lacks the ability to revive his interest?

"Let a very hardened heart be her protection against a sensibility which is certain to be her undoing; a woman susceptible of sympathies must expect nothing but the worst, for weaker, more delicate, thinner-skinned than men, she will be rent much more cruelly by all that assails this sensibility; whereupon she may bid all pleasure farewell. Her complexion moves her to lust; if, owing to this excess of sensibility we are seeking to destroy, she goes and enslaves herself to one man only, as of that moment she deprives herself of all the charms of libertinage, the libertinage which, in view of the way Nature has constructed her, alone befits her, can alone render her truly happy."

Once again I was left to myself and was recovering my breath when an elderly man presented himself, he had a fistful of withes and meant to warm my hinder parts therewith and to have me warm his stave.

"You're the one they admitted tonight, are you not?" he began.

"I am."

"A pity I haven't come across you until now," said he, "I have been busy in seraglio."

A delightful young man appeared and dealt with me in the same way, though he lashed me more stoutly; next, one after the other, a procession of ten persons, six of them men of the law, they all had me bumwise. I was quite afire, I repaired to a public convenience: as women were using only those where men were in attendance, it was a lad who, after settling me upon the throne and helping me off again, enquired, could he lend me his tongue? Returning to the assembly hall I remarked some men waiting about, apparently to waylay women emerging from the privies; and indeed one of them steps up

and asks leave to kiss me all over. It is without a word he hastens away from me to join a youth just then entering the same jakes; and I profit from a brief respite to survey the scene. Believe me when I say that there, in that spacious room, the overall spectacle was one such as distanced anything the most lascivious imagination could possibly conceive in the course of three score years: what a wealth of lascivious attitudes! How many curious doings, what a variety of tastes and preferences!

Oh great God, I murmured, how right wondrous is Nature, how splendid, and how delicious are these all the passions she gives us.

But everywhere my eye roved, it was to be amazed at the same extraordinary state of affairs: save for the utterances incidental to the action, sometimes shrill exclamations of pleasure, and much blasphemy, sometimes loud, there was no other sound, one could have heard a pin drop. Over all that was astir the most entire order reigned; were some altercations to arise, and it happened very rarely, a gesture from the President or the Censor restored peace and quiet in a trice; the most decent activities could not have transpired amidst greater calm. And thus I was made quickly to realize, that of all the things there are in the world, the passions are those that command the greatest respect from human beings.

Men and women in ever growing numbers were beginning to remove to the seraglios; tickets were being distributed by the President, a smile upon her lips. I was now had at by several women; then by several more.

The President developed a sudden craving for me; she appointed a man to relieve her at her post, and we came to grips and kissed one another nigh to death; with the exception of Clairwil, never had I seen a woman so lewd.

Weary of the victim's part, I was eager to play an active rôle in my turn: I intercepted half a dozen young men who had me steadily for nearly two hours.

Sweet music was now to be heard; 'twas supper being announced, and I went with the others into the voluptuous dining hall. It was decorated so as to appear a forest; between the trees were countless little glades within each of which was a table set for twelve. Garlands of flowers hung in festoons from the trees, thousands and thousands

of candles, disposed as skilfully as in the assembly hall, shed a soft light; two servants delegated to each table served it promptly, cleverly, and in silence. Scarcely two hundred persons were present, the rest were all in the seraglios. You chose the table you wished and there, amongst friends, splendidly regaled, to the sound of enchanting chamber-music, you gave yourself up simultaneously to the intemperances of Comus and to all the lewd riotings of Cypris.

Clairwil, back from seraglio, had sat down next to me; her manifest agitation betokened recent excessive behavior: the hard glitter in her eyes, the flushed cheeks, her unloosed hair floating over her breasts, the obscene, the ferocious language coming from her mouth, in everything there were reflections and echoes of the transport which made her a hundred times lovelier to see; I bent towards her and we kissed.

"Villain," said I, "what ocean of horrors has thou been swimming in?"

"Be not envious," she returned, "when next I plunge back into them, and 'twill be soon, thou shalt be at my side."

Owing to the studied placing of the glades there was not one table whence you could not see all the others.

Some of the celebrants were constantly leaving table and repairing to the latrines, and it was impossible to refuse to do their bidding; the desires of Sodality members were laws for the individuals they focussed upon. The latter soon found opportunity to demand of others what had been demanded of him; wherever you glanced, it was masters and slaves you saw; and the slaves, steadied by the knowledge that the roles would be reversed shortly, complied unhesitatingly with orders it would be their turn to issue in a moment.

Raised upon a throne from which she could oversee everything, the President maintained order at the supper as before in the hall; and the same calm prevailed. Conversations were held in a subdued tone; one could easily imagine oneself in the temple of Venus, whose statue moreover was visible within a bower of myrtle and roses, and the foregathered worshippers, one perceived, tastefully avoided disturbing their rites by any of those rude

vociferations which are proper only to pedantry and stupidity.

Rare wines and succulent viands made the after-supper orgies even more luxurious than the preceding ones. I had further assaults, terrible assaults, to sustain; individuals of every sex passed through my hands, not a spot on my body was left unsullied; and if I ended up with fearfully battered buttocks, mine also was the glory of having wrecked havoc upon innumerable others. Day dawned at last and I came away so whelmed by fatigue, so dry from delicious exertion that I had to keep my bed for a day and a half.

My month-long novitiate seemed an eternity; it came finally to a close, and mine now was the so hotly coveted right to penetrate into the seraglios. Clairwil, eager to acquaint me with everything, guided me everywhere.

Four large rooms ringed by bed-chambers and cells formed the interior of each of these isolated wings; the large rooms were for the use of those who wished to enjoy themselves publicly, the cells for those who preferred privacy in their pleasure; and the inmates were lodged in the chambers. Taste and art presided over the furnishing; the cells especially were of the highest elegance, so many little chapels consecrated to libertinage, where nothing lacked that might be instrumental to stimulating worship. Four duennas governed each seraglio; they took the tickets you brought with you, enquired of your desires and saw speedily to their satisfaction; also on hand, ready to offer their services, were a chirurgeon, a midwife, an executioner and a gaoler, all of prodigiously melancholy aspect.

"You are not to think," Clairwil remarked to me, "that those individuals there have simply been picked at random from the class that ordinarily supplies them; they are libertines like us, but less prosperous: unable to pay the admission fee, they fulfil their functions out of pleasure and just as you would suppose, the job is done better in this manner. Some of them receive a stipend, others ask only to enjoy a member's privileges, these are granted them."

While on duty those personages wore awesome costumes: the gaolers had on great belts whence hung rings

of keys, the fustigators carried about a battery of whips and martinets, and the executioner, swart, bare-armed, fearfully moustached, had a cutlass and a stilet at his side. Seeing Clairwil enter, the executioner rose from where he was sitting on a tabouret and greeted her with a kiss.

"Have some work for me today?"

"Look here," she answered, "I've brought you a novice. Count upon it, she'll have at least as many chores for you as I."

And the wicked fellow, kissing me as he had done my friend, assured me that he was in every sense at my command. I thanked him, embraced him most warmly, and we resumed our visit of the place.

Each of the four central rooms was reserved for a particular category of passion: in the first, you gave way to simple ones. The second room was the theater of flagellations and other irregular passions. The third of cruel proceedings; the fourth of murders. Women were admitted into the seraglio of boys and into the other of girls, men likewise could frequent either. Arriving, we found all the inmates being employed or else in their chambers waiting to be put to use. Clairwil opened a few doors and showed me some truly heavenly creatures; they were in gauze shifts, had flowers in their hair, and welcomed us with an air of profoundest reverence. I fell to toying with a lovely thing; I was already handling her breasts when Clairwil scolded me for the delicate and unduly decent manner I was employing.

"That's not the way you behave with this trash," said she, "they don't even deserve the honor of being selected for our consumption. . . . Command, they obey."

I altered my tone at once, and my orders were responded to with blindest obedience and inspiring alacrity. We entered other chambers; it was the same charms everywhere, the same beauty, everywhere the same submissiveness.

"You know," I confided to Clairwil, "we really must not go away without leaving our mark."

We installed ourselves in the first of the main rooms and were sent fifteen lads aged between eighteen and twenty; we ranged them in a line in front of us and then sprawled on couches; by way of defiance Clairwil and I

struck the lewdest possible attitudes. There is nothing quite like a woman's temperament when excited, 'tis a sort of volcano you only further inflame in your attempts to appease it. We called for more men; a fresh batch of eighteen arrived; for this second round we changed roles, and they compared very favorably with the fifteen we had just exhausted.

"Let's go to the room where extraordinary things are accomplished," I proposed. "If you don't care to do anything, there is no reason why we must; but we shall be able to watch."

I had twenty girls stood in line and from among them selected one of seventeen, she was as engaging a creature as any you have ever seen.

Fancying I would be sooner moved to pity than a man, cast herself at my feet in a ludicrous effort to sway me: a very angel for beauty and full of grace, her methods would certainly have succeeded with a less toughened adversary, with someone whose soul was less corrupted than mine. I had developed beyond the point where pleas are heard. Rather, the only effect her wiles had upon me, was to fan the flames of my irritation. . . . And indeed, even had it not been so, would I have dared relent in Clairwil's presence? I invited Clairwil to come home with me; we supped and then retired to bed together. 'Twas then that charming personage, inclining to the belief I had lacked somewhat of determination in my latest performance, decided she had best speak to me, and this is what she said.

"The truth, Juliette, is that a certain undeniable progress notwithstanding, your conscience has yet to reach the stage I should desire; what I demand of it, is that it become so warped as to be unable to reassume its former shape; to achieve this there are means to employ; I don't mind indicating what they are, but I am not so sure you have the strength to apply them. Those means, my dearest friend, are simple in themselves: they consist in doing, immediately, in cold blood, that very thing which, done in the throes of passion, has been able to cause you remorse when later on you recover your wits."

"Clairwil," said I to my friend, "your suggestions are excellent, doubtless, but perhaps unnecessary. I am not

without experience in the profession of vice, and the soul in me requires no fortification. Neither does my purpose. Rest assured, you shall never see me falter whatever the deed to be perpetrated whether for the sake of my material advantage or for that of my pleasure."

"Dear heart," said Clairwil, "I beseech you come with me to a university where the greatest minds of France teach, it is a truly extraordinary idea. There is a gorgeous professor I have wanted for the past six months."

"Let's be away," said I.

We went by carriage; our simple, artless toilettes conformed wonderfully to our designs, and Dean Claude, whom we asked for and who quickly ushered us to his private study, could not have taken us for anything but models of studiousness.

"Fair lady," quoth he, and his tone was impassioned, "your friend, in a case very like unto your own, has also proposed things, ah . . . which your starry gaze inspires and which I . . . I burn to do, I. . . . You are two sirens, your sweet words bewitch me and I am no longer able to resist—let's leave the grounds; I have a small room, it is not far from here . . . if you will consent to come, I shall do everything in my power to put you at ease."

Then, stumbling and grasping Clairwil by the hand: "Follow me, ladies, come with me."

And out we go.

Night had fallen, there was no moon; Claude told us to look sharply after him but to keep twenty paces back. He set off for the Vaugirard Barrier, and we soon found ourselves in a mysterious and chilly cell; the intellectual Claude offered us cakes and liqueurs.

"Excellent sir," my companion said to him, "enough of this mystical chatter; we know the kind of man we are dealing with; we love you, why, what am I saying? Join us in laughing at the ruse we employed to get this far, contrive to make us feel our efforts have not been for naught. Speaking for myself, I tell you I have worshipped you for a year and I have been leaking for two hours in anticipation. There," went on our libertine, tossing up her skirts, "there's where I'd have you lodge it; look, is the cage not fitting for the bird?"

Promptly flinging herself upon the bēd, the rascal had the fellow in a trice.

"Will you behold him, Juliette!" cried Clairwil, already half swooning away. That which you enjoy doing you always do well; and the reader ought not to forget Juliette's affirmation, to wit, that her greatest delight consisted in being had by the male sex. The statement comes as no surprise, for what else is so voluptuous? How flattering to one's pride, how stirring thus to observe one's handiwork take shape! And the exhilaration of this creative activity, especially as the task nears completion. Ah, need one be a woman to taste this pleasure? What man, be he only mildly sensual, is unable to appreciate it? and who, at least once in his life, has not laid an affectionate hand upon some other member than his own?

"He's assassinating me, the great swine," shrieks Clairwil, swearing like one of the damned; "I can't resist this bulleting—can you not at least kiss me, pig that you are? Don't squander your resources, I am going to call upon you again."

"We're whores, you understand, arrant little whores, we're good for any purpose, and when we go somewhere it is with the intention of having no part of ourselves left untouched."

It was a much tattered and torn Clairwil who emerged from the fray; I was bent upon replacing her there.

"One must not," she said, "risk one's well-being for an instant's vain pleasure; this is no man we have here but a bull."

"Mesdames," went on the professor, seated between us, "do you really fancy we set any more store by knowledge than do you? Far from it, *the passions,* writes a wise author, *acquire additional force beneath the ascetic, the heart harbors those seeds, example brings them to flower, idleness fertilizes them, occasion causes them to multiply —resist the passions? By what possible means?* 'Tis in the ranks of the intellectuals, my dear ladies, you find the authentic rebels, doubters you may be, you others, skeptics perhaps, but 'tis a characteristic of ignorance to prefer the unknown, the fantastic, the farfetched, the incredible, indeed, the terrible, to whatever is forthright, simple, and true. Truth titillates the imagination far less

than fiction; the vulgar ask for nothing better than to listen to the preposterous indoctrinations we teach."

Clairwil asked the Dean, whether there were other such libertines as he in his university; upon Claude's affirmation that there were at least thirty, my friend wanted to know if it might be possible to pass an evening amidst the whole student body.

"Certainly," Claude answered, "if ever you wish a memorable evening you have only to come and you will be treated right royally—and to more than you bargain for, I dare say."

Directly the professor had departed, Clairwil turned to me, a wicked glitter in her eye. "Juliette," said she, "you'll not be surprised to hear it: that fellow was an expert!

"I see no reason why we might not induce him to spend twenty-four hours with us at your country estate; . . . Ah Juliette, what a man!"

While waiting for the professor we passed the time inspecting his quarters.

'Twas a mine of obscene engravings and literature we turned up: the first volume was *Le Portier des Chartreux*, more a bawdy production than a libertine one and which, despite the touching candor and sincerity permeating it, was, according to rumor, disowned by the author as he lay on his death-bed. Bah, what folly. The fellow capable at such a time of repeating what he dared say or write in the course of his life, is a rank coward, whose memory ought to be execrated by posterity.

The second was *l'Académie des Dames*, a well conceived work but poor in the execution; done by a faint-hearted man, who seems to have scented the truth but was afraid to tell it; and full of boring conversations.

*L'Education de Laure* was the third book we found. Another complete failure owing to extraneous and false considerations dominating the composition. Had the author brought the wife-murder frankly onto the stage instead of leaving it off somewhere in the wings, and made something substantial of the incest, which he hints at constantly but never explores; had he increased the number of lewd scenes . . . shown in action those cruel tastes he restricts himself to mentioning, abstractly, in his

preface; the work, most imaginative, would have been delicious: but tremblers are my despair, I lose all patience with them and would prefer a hundred times over that they write nothing rather than give us bare ideas only, and in halves at that.

*Thérèse Philosophe* was there, a charming performance from the pen of the Marquis d'Argens,* alone to have discerned the possibilities of the genre, though only partially realizing them; alone to have achieved happy results from the combining of lust and impiety. These, speedily placed before the public, and in the shape the author had intially conceived them, finally gave us an idea of what an immoral book could be.

The others were all examples of those deplorable little pamphlets commonly got up in coffee-houses or in brothels and which regularly reveal mean-spirited buffoons toiling at the instigation of hunger and under the guidance of some burlesque muse; lust, the child of opulence and of superiority, cannot be treated save by persons of a certain condition, of a certain quality . . . that is, by persons who, favored by Nature at the outset, have after that benefitted from wealth enough to be able themselves to try what they describe in their lewd pages. Well, as we are reminded by their gropings and feebleness of expression, such experience is totally denied to the smutty fellows who flood us with the low scribblings I am speaking of, amongst which I do not hesitate to include those of Mirabeau, who in order to be something would fain be a libertine and who in fact throughout the whole of his life was nothing at all.

No, nothing, not even a legislator. Very conclusive evidence of the misjudgment and the folly which, in France, characterized the year 1789 is supplied in the ridiculous enthusiasm stirred up by that miserable monarchist spy. What today is the general opinion of that unwell and exceedingly unclever individual? He is considered a knave, a traitor, and a dunce.

Pursuing our search through Claude's belongings, we came upon dildoes, cat-o'-nine-tails, articles from which

* The renowned Caylus contributed the engravings.

we were able to deduce the extent to which the man was familiar with libertine practices; and now he returned.

"I have," he reported, "arranged all, you may come whenever you wish."

"It shan't be long before we do, my friend," said I; "after being so liberally entertained by a single member of the university, we cannot but anticipate wonders from the rest: no need to tell you we have fiery lusts, from what you have already seen you may judge what they will be able to undertake when still better served. While waiting, Claude, let me invite you to pay us a visit; my friend and I will be delighted to receive you at a pleasant little place I own in the country, and where we are going in three days' time. Will you come? You will enjoy yourself. Between now and then let me recommend repose. Don't fail us."

Easter lay nearly a month off and this interval being marked by two outstanding occurrences, I believe I shall speak of them at this point.

The first of these events was the tragic death of Claude; on the appointed day he was to arrive in the country.

I now come to the second of these two events:

Surrounded by a crowd of sycophants and clients who seemed to be thinking that their fate lay in my lap, I was occupied with my toilette when a servant ushered in a middle-aged man, visibly of mean condition, and who begged me for a brief private interview. I have it explained to the fellow, that I am not in the habit of receiving such folk as he, that if the matter be one of aid, or a good word spoken to the Minister, the case may be presented to me in writing and I will consider whether anything can be done; but the shabby visitor will not be put off. More from curiosity than anything else, I decide to give him audience and have him wait in the little drawing room where I held private parleys at the time; then, instructing my servants to remain within call, I go to find out what business has brought this individual to me.

"My name, madame, is Bernole," the stranger begins, "a name with which you are surely unacquainted. It would be less unfamiliar to the mother you lost, to that

excellent woman who were she alive would not allow you to continue this however lucrative existence of shameless disorderliness and misbehavior."

"Sir," I interrupt, "your tone does not strike me as fitting to somebody who has come to ask a favor—"

"Softly, Juliette, softly," Bernole replies, "it is nonetheless possible that I am going to ask you a favor and equally possible that I have a right to adopt this tone which displeases you."

"As regards your rank, sir, I would have you know that—"

"And I would have you know, Juliette, that if I have come to ask your help, you ought to be flattered by the request. Kindly look at these papers, young lady: a glance will inform you of my need of that help and at the same time of your duty to grant it."

I had but to scan those documents. "My God," I gasped, "what, my mother! She was guilty . . . and with you?"

"Precisely, Juliette; I am your father," and Bernole spoke most crisply. "I brought you into this world . . . I was a cousin of your mother, my parents had prepared the match, we were already betrothed when the offer of another marriage, a more advantageous one, induced them to alter their plans. They turned their back upon your mother—at a time when she was pregnant, you were in her womb. She and I contrived to deceive the man whom you knew as your father, he was completely taken in. You are not his child but mine; I can prove it. Below your right breast is a birthmark, a brownish spot the size of a small coin . . . Juliette, have you one such mark?"

"I do, sir."

"Then recognize your father, oh cold, unfeeling soul! Or if you are not willing to believe me, read through these papers with a little attention, they will banish every shred of doubt. After the death of your mother . . . and it was a horrible death, the vicious doing of one Noirceuil, the same with whom you, excused by no ignorance of the facts, dare maintain a criminal relationship, and who would be broken on the wheel tomorrow if only we had the necessary evidence—and, unfortunately, it is

lacking—; after her death, I say, I was deluged by every imaginable piece of misfortune. All I had, I lost. I lost all your mother left me as well. For eighteen years now I have subsisted thanks to public charity alone; but I have found you at last, Juliette, and all my sufferings are soon to be over . . ."

"Sir, I have a sister who in all likelihood is still floundering amidst hardships caused by the prejudices I ridded myself of very early on; is she also your child?"

"Justine?"

"That is correct."

"She is indeed my daughter. The woman who bore her loved me, that love endured despite every obstacle; I alone had the joy of making her a mother."

Knowing me as you do, my friends, you must realize that this affair was distasteful to me, in as much as there are few souls so poorly attuned to gratitude and filial sentiments as mine; I'd not dropped one tear at the loss of the person I had always assumed to be my father, would it have been natural for me to be moved by the calamities which had befallen this other one fate restored to me? And the bestowing of alms, I need hardly remind you, was not a pastime to which I was much given; I considered charity the worst use money could be put to; and this insolent beggar might talk as he like about being my father, the fact remained that to satisfy him I had either to part with some silver or plead in his favor before a Minister who, quite as stern, quite as unbending as I in his attitude toward such matters, could hardly be expected to lend a complacent ear to my importunings. To be sure, this individual was my father, of that there could be no question, the proof was there, but to it Nature incited in me no response at all, none. It was with sheer indifference I stared at the individual standing in front of me. The silence endured several minutes.

"Sir," said I at last, "the tales you tell me may be perfectly true; however, I see not the faintest reason for being obliged to listen to them. I have principles, sir, steadfast principles which, unluckily for you, are totally incompatible with this commiseration you implore. As for the titles of paternity, here you are, I hand you back

the papers which establish them, and let me also give you the assurance that I haven't the least need of them: whether I have a father or whether I do not have a father, you would surely have trouble realizing how little I care. And so my advice to you, sir, is to relieve me very promptly of your presence unless through obstinacy you wish to compel me to have you thrown bodily out that window." I rise, intending to ring for my servants without further ado; but Bernole rushes forward, stays my hand.

"Ungrateful child!" he cries, "do not punish me for a sin over which I have shed a lifetime's tears—you are of illegitimate birth, aye, alack, but does my blood not run in your veins for all that? And do you not owe me your aid? If you cannot heed the feelings Nature seems to have forgot to put in your breast, will you not hark to the plaintive accents of misery and of despair?" Sinking down before me, clutching my knees, wetting them with his tears, "Juliette," says he, gazing up at my face, "Juliette, enormous wealth is thine, and it is but a crust of bread thy penniless father begs of thee! Girl, think of thy mother, wouldst thou refuse succour to the man who loved her? The only man to have loved her who bore thee nine months in her womb, hast thou no respect for him? Attend the prayer of the lowly, else heaven shall smite thee in thy wickedness."

Undeniably, pathos abounded in the wretch's speech; but there are hearts which harden rather than melt before the efforts of those who strive to appeal to them. Like unto the kind of wood that toughens when exposed to fire, 'tis in the very element which one would suppose ought to consume them that they acquire an added degree of force. At first it was the icy stare of indifference I bent upon Bernole; my glance now warmed, became the fiery one of pleasure; and my throat constricted as there filtered through my veins that perfidious delight which fastens upon us at the thought or the recollection or the designing of an act of badness; my brows knit, my breathing quickens, and feeling myself grow ever harsher because this harshness is agreeable, because it is arousing . . . "I have told you," I declare to the boor groveling at my feet, "that I don't care who you are, that I shall

never care who you are, and that I never give anything to the needy; and so I shall say it once again, and this shall be the last time: kindly get out of here. Or do you want to rot in some dungeon?"

A wave of madness sweeps over the man: employing now imprecations, now pleas, then invectives and then expressions of endearment, he beats his head against the floor, opens a gash in his brow, my apartment is spattered with his blood. . . . This blood is my blood; I watch it well forth, and I am happy. Happiness chokes me. After several exquisite minutes, I ring.

"Expel this clown from my house," I instruct my servants, "forcibly; but get his address before you do."

I was obeyed. . . . Overwrought, inflamed, I was obliged to have immediate resort to my women who were two hours toiling to restore me to my senses. Powerful effect of crime upon a heart like mine! 'Twas written in the sacred book of Nature, that everything apt to outrage the Nature common spirits invariably misunderstand, was sure to constitute, for me, the means to pleasure.

Both Noirceuil and the Minister were dining with me that day; I asked the former, was he acquainted with an individual called Bernole, and who claimed to have been my mother's beau and to have fathered me?

"Yes," said Noirceuil, "I knew a Bernole. He had investments with your father and his money was lost along with your family's when I operated its ruin. If I remember rightly he was indeed fond of your mother, over whom he fairly grieved when she was gone; I dare say it was through no fault of his I wasn't hanged. . . . Do you mean to tell me the fellow is still about? Then it is high time he were put properly out of the way."

"We can lodge him in the Bastille before the day is out," said Saint-Fond. "Juliette has only to ask . . ."

"No," Noirceuil broke in, "it would be a mistake to hurry for there are possibilities here, it seems to me. I already envisage a pathetic scene . . ."

"Come, come gentlemen, hear me out if you please. The undertaking must be embellished by some pretty details. It strikes me Bernole and I ought to meet again: I'll tell him I am dreadfully sorry about what happened today, declare it was all a misunderstanding, I'll deceive

him by means of advances, we'll kiss, don't you know, I'll have him in love with me in half an hour, beside himself, out of his mind, he'll stick me. . . . You, Saint-Fond, at this point you'll suddenly appear, at the critical instant you'll burst into the room, you are my lover, you are furious, you intend to punish me, pointing a dagger to my breast you enjoin me to kill Bernole or perish myself. So I kill him, of course. We shall include Clairwil in the scene, she will surely be able to contribute something original to it."

The storm abated, a draught for five hundred thousand francs was delivered to me and with it I had the promise of a million payable the day the project was enacted.

The prospect of this reward tempted me sorely; impossible to turn back now. I rush to my estate; there, I take pen in hand and write to Bernole. Kind sir, I begin, filial devotion has found its way into my heart at last, and as I write I weep: it is the pure country air, apparently, that has dispelled the ferocity we inhale from the foul atmosphere of Paris; come visit me here in these idyllic rustic surroundings, in this place where Nature reigns uncontested, and let me give vent to the feelings Nature inspires in me for you, etc. My man arrives. . . . Ah, the joy of duping him, very sweet it was, sweet beyond belief or telling; I was fairly quaking from delight. The first thing I did was display to him the luxuriousness of my circumstances, he was dazzled; my artful caresses completed his seduction.

After we had supped in richest style, "By what possible means," I asked, "can I hope to right the wrongs I did you all because of my wicked mind? Monsieur Bernole," I declared, "my position is not easy. I was afraid. I must watch my step very closely. I am the Minister's confidante, his friend; great is his power, he need but lift a finger and I am doomed. In you, as you stood before me, I detecting nothing of a father; no, let me say it out, the emotions which assailed me were not a daughter's, they were something a thousand times more tender and more delicate, and that accounts for why, dreading lest I succumb to them, I was obliged to feign coldness, to behave harshly, aye, cruelly. What else could I do? Overcome by affection, by the most sacred love. . . . Eh, Bernole, you

loved my mother, I would also have you love me; but if we are to know happiness together, discretion is required of us both, discretion, that is all; are you such a man as a woman may rely upon?"

The upright and decent Bernole shuddered at hearing these words.

"My Juliette," replied he, deeply stirred, "I seek to reawaken your sense of filial love only; that alone is due me. Tax me not with immorality for having lived out of wedlock with your mother: we both believed that such voluntarily contracted ties as bound us together were valid in the eyes of heaven, and these we respected; 'twas not lawful, what we did, I am aware of that, I was aware of it then, but our error was one Nature comprehends and forgives, whilst what you propose to me is abhorrent to her."

"Why Bernole, yours is a benighted mind!" I cried, my solicitations having brought me to the point of kissing him and laying a hand upon his thigh. "You whom I adore, alas," I went on with mounting heat, "are my sentiments of no interest to you? Come give life a second time to her whose sole glory is to have been sired by you: my first existence I owe to love, let me owe it another also; you gave me life, will you not make that life worth living? Oh my Bernole, 'tis so, 'tis so: without you I must die."

Two breasts white as snow and prettily shaped which as though by accident pop into sight that same moment, eyes full of dreamy longing, of languor and of lust . . . straying hands wandering up the paternal legs to unbutton the paternal pantaloons; at length Bernole's reluctant passions are roused . . .

"Good God, what are these assaults," he exclaims, "and how am I to withstand them? How spurn the living image of her whom I worshipped up until the very end?"

"And today, Bernole, your beloved is restored to you —behold in me she whom you loved in the past—she breathes; by the sweet kisses her mouth thirsts after bring her entirely back to life—ah, do you realize the state you are putting me in?"

Gullible Bernole, quite swept off his feet, falls into the trap I have laid for his virtue, she who caresses the

sot is thoughtful only of the base scheme that is soon to procure his undoing.

Bernole's efforts surpassed my hopes: I was soundly taken seven times over and all the while obsessed by my ferocious designs.

There arrived that longed for tomorrow when I was to savour the unspeakable charms of a crime I was in a perfect panic of eagerness to perpetrate. I looked forth upon the day in its dawning: Nature, whom I was about to outrage so gravely, had never appeared to me in such beauty; and glancing in a mirror I saw myself as prettier, healthier, more winsome than ever I had been before; within me there were hidden stirrings, never had they needled me so sharply, so imperiously as now they did. Rising from my bed, I sensed myself dominated by a lust . . . by a wickedness . . . I was devoured by a craving for abominations; and in me there was something beyond words bitter: it was despair at being incapable of carrying horror to the full extent described by my desires . . .

'Tis a crime I am soon to commit, I mused, something which would be commonly held a very black crime. But though it be black, though it be heinous, it is only one crime. And what is a single crime to a person who wishes only to live in the midst of a multitude of crimes, who wishes to live for the sake of crime alone, who idolizes it and nothing else?

The whole morning I was restive, gloomy, testy, I fidgeted. I flogged two of my female hirelings, I was cross and I spent the remainder of the day whiling the time away at all sorts of little savageries. I thought the promised supper would never arrive; but it did at last. I had issued orders that it be as lavish as the other of the day before, and as I had done then, again drew Bernole upon a couch. An instant or two later the door is flung open and in storm Clairwil, Noirceuil and Saint-Fond, swearing and armed; Bernole is dragged off my back and bound hand and foot.

"Juliette," a raging Saint-Fond declares, "you deserve to be butchered along with this monster for having betrayed the trust I have always placed in you. Would you

live, eh? Then you have no choice: there are three balls in this pistol, take it and blow the churl's brains out."

"Great heaven!" I shrilled theatrically. "What are you demanding of me? This man is my father—"

"Rubbish. Come be quick about it: take this pistol instantly, or die yourself."

"Woe is me," I sighed, "my hand trembles, give me the weapon nevertheless. What must be, must me," said I; "beloved father, will you pardon this act? I am under constraint, you observe it—"

"Vile creature," Bernole answered, "do as you are told. Aye, go ahead. But spare me having to listen to you. I do not wish to be made a fool of."

"Very well then, papa," said Clairwil gaily, "since you don't wish to be made a fool of, you shan't be; just as you have guessed, your death is of your daughter's contriving—and right indeed she is to want to murder the great scoundrel you must be for ever having given life to such a child."

I fire. The ball enters Bernole's brow; he expires.

Barbarous Saint-Fond rises and goes to peer at the victim; he stands over the body a long time, manifestly in ecstasy. (He always adored such situations.) He calls my name, would have me look also. . . . While I do he casts sidelong glances at me, studying my reaction; my sang-froid satisfies him.

After which a most delicious meal is brought in and we take places round a table.

"Juliette," says Saint-Fond kissing me and laying the money down by my plate, "here is what I promised you. You will not take it amiss if I tell you that until today I allowed myself to harbor one or two little doubts as to the stuff you were made of. There is no longer any room for them. Your performance was irreproachable."

"You will excuse me," put in Clairwil, "but I am not of that opinion. I seem still to notice the same failing in her: whenever Juliette commits a crime it's enthusiastically. One must proceed calmly, deliberately, lucidly. Crime is the torch that should fire the passions, 'tis a commonplace; but I have the suspicion that with her it is the reverse, passion firing her to crime."

"The difference is enormous," Saint-Fond remarked, "for in such a case crime is but accessory, whereas it ought to be primary."

"I am afraid I share Clairwil's view, my dear Juliette," said Noirceuil; "you need further encouragement, this ruinous sensibility plaguing you, it must be dealt with. All the irregularities into which our imagination leads us," he continued, "are exact indices of our degree of intelligence. Its vivacity, its impetuosities, in a superior being, are so powerful that it will stop at nothing; obstacles to surmount represent that many more delights; and their overcoming is not necessarily proof of depravity, as fools suppose, but evidence of the mind's strengthening. You, Juliete, have now reached the age where your faculties are at their apogee; you enter your prime readied by earnest study, by solid reflexion, by a wholesale rejection of all the curbs and all the prejudices imposed and acquired in childhood. We may depend upon it, my friends, Juliette will go as far as she possibly can; but I ask that she not tarry on the way, nor even pause, that if ever she casts a glance backward it be then to chide herself for having made such modest progress, and not to be amazed at the great distances she has covered."

"I expect still more," said Clairwil. "Let me repeat: I expect Juliette to do evil—not to quicken her lust, as I believe it is her habit at present, but solely for the pleasure of doing it. I ask that in bare evil, evil free of all lewd accoutrements, she find all the delight satisfying her lust affords her; I ask that she learn to dispense with all vehicles, with all pretexts for the doing of evil."

"My dear," I replied, "there is nothing obscure in your philosophy; I grasp these theories because their practice suits me. Do you doubt it? I am prepared to prove it to you; put me to whatever test you like. Had you somewhat more carefully observed my comportment in the business we have lately dispatched, you would not, I am sure, have formulated these criticisms; I am come to the stage where I love evil for its own sake; only in crime, I have recently noticed, do my passions catch fire and where the seasoning of crime is lacking I taste no joy. There remains a single point I would consult you upon. Of remorse I experienced nothing any more, I may truth-

fully declare that for me it has ceased altogether to exist, never a twinge of it regardless of the abomination I indulge in; but, d'ye know, I am sometimes ashamed of myself. I blush, like Eve, abashed after eating the apple. Our activities, our extravagances, these are things whereof I would not be pleased to have intelligence leak out, things I am loath to own save to our close friends—why is it so?"

"In this," answered Saint-Fond, "that shame reflects the wound inflicted upon public opinion by a given piece of wickedness, whilst remorse relates to the pain that wickedness does to our own conscience; in such sort, that it is possible to be ashamed of a deed that causes no remorse when this deed offends conventional practice only, without afflicting one's conscience; and similarly it is possible to be unashamedly contrite if the deed committed accords with the usages and customs of our country, but jars with our conscience. For example: to stroll naked down the central alley in the Tuileries might well make a man blush, but could hardly make him remorseful; and a military commander will perhaps feel badly at having sent twenty thousand of his troops to their death in a battle, but he is not apt to be ashamed. You now belong to the Sodality of the Friends of Crime; it may be safely predicted that participation in its activities will by and by rid you of your tendency to shame, of your capacity for it: you will acquire the habit of pronounced cynicism, it will make short work of the weakness bothering you at present; and to accelerate the cure, I urge you to parade your misbehavior, to show yourself nude in public, frequently, and to strive after the most arrantly whorish effects in your dress; you'll gradually cease to blush at anything; you shall sense nothing but pleasure there where once upon a time you were stricken by shame."

More serious matters were broached next: I was informed by Saint-Fond that the marriage of his daughter Alexandrine to Noirceuil, his friend, was about to be concluded at long last, and that he and his son-in-law to be were agreed that the young lady should pass a season with me, living in my house, where she would be familiarized with, and adapted to, the tastes of the individual to whom she was going to be joined maritally.

"We request you, Noirceuil and I," Saint-Fond pursued, "to shape this little soul after your own. Cultivate it, nurture it assiduously, make it liberal provision of good counsel and bright example; will Noirceuil keep the girl by him if he finds her soundly formed? Perhaps. But it were most unlikely he'll long abide her if she prove gauche or a prude. So endeavor, Juliette, to achieve something you can be proud of and which will be useful to us all; the pains you take will not be overlooked."

"Sir," said I to the Minister, "you know that such lessons as these can only be given between a pair of sheets—"

"Of course, of course, my dear," Saint-Fond nodded, "that is what I have in mind."

"By all means yes," Noirceuil echoed.

"Obviously," said Clairwil. "How educate a girl save you lie with her?"

"Quite," Noirceuil continued: "our good Juliette will bed with my wife as often as she sees fit."

Taking up a fresh subject, Saint-Fond declared, "Examine virtue from every viewpoint and you always find it useless and dangerous," addressing himself to me, "if you still entertain prejudices I should like to rid you of them once and for all, they cannot have anything but the worst influence upon your destiny. Opinions are important in life, I should like to make certain that yours are wholesome; for it is dreadful, if one is born with penchants for evil-doing, not to be able to do evil save in fear and trembling. Hear me, my angel, take note of what I say: were your activities to hurl the entire natural order into confusion, you would be doing no more than exercising the faculties Nature gave you for that—faculties which Nature was perfectly aware you would employ for that; their employment is obviously not something Nature can object to or condemn, since instead of neutralizing these harmful faculties she originally gave you, or subsequently depriving you of them, she does naught but incite in you, continually, the desire to make the most of them."

"Believe me, Saint-Fond," I replied to my lover, "to all the principles you have just settled I adhere most cordially. There is only one thing disturbs me: one must,

you asserted, be treacherous in one's dealings with everybody; now, if by ill chance you were so with me—"

"You need dread no such eventuality," the Minister affirmed at once. "I shall never be treacherous toward my friends, if merely because one cannot very well do without something solid and sure in the world; and what's left if you cannot count upon your intercourse with your friends? You may therefore be certain, all three of you, that I shall never play you false unless you wrong me first. The reason is simple. We live side by side: is it not true, that if you discover I am deceiving you, you will deceive me in return at the first opportunity; and I do not want to be deceived; there's the whole of my logic upon the chapter of friendship. Experience shows that between persons of the same sex the sentiment of friendship is not easy to preserve, and impossible between persons of unlike sex; I value it in so far as it may be founded upon likenesses of humor and compatibilities of taste, which happens only very seldom; but it is a great error to suppose virtue must be its cement; if that were so, friendship would become an unbearably dull sentiment which monotony would soon destroy."

It was past midnight; we retired, the four of us repairing to a bed eight feet long and eight wide, built for such scenes; and after some lewd ones, some foul ones, we went to sleep. Noirceuil had business awaiting him in the city, and left us early the next day; Clairwil remained with me to keep Saint-Fond company, for the Minister was disposed to spend a few more days in the country.

Upon our return to Paris Saint-Fond brought me his daughter, whose apartment had been put in readiness during our absence. Alexandrine was of an extraordinary and eminently regular beauty; she could boast of a sublime bust, the prettiest details distinguished her forms, her skin was glowing clear, her flesh firm, there was grace and ripeness in her limbs, heaven shone in her face, and there was considerable of the romantic in her spirit.

"Here is my daughter," said Saint-Fond, introducing her to me. "I mean, as you know, to marry her to Noirceuil, who is not the man to be rattled by the liberties I have taken with her and which I still take every day. There's some fruit left on the tree, however: frontwardly,

Alexandrine has treasures still be be assessed. But on the hinder side . . . her ass, this gorgeous ass, Juliette, has been long the object of my depradations. Who could have resisted such a temptation? Look at it, my angel, and tell me now, have you ever seen anything so inviting in all your life?

"I confide this girl to you, Juliette, educate her for a while; make her worthy of the gentleman whose wife she shall be, breed in her the taste for all crimes and the liveliest horror for all virtues. To you I cede my rights over her; transmit to her the philosophical systems you have received from him who is to wed her; give her all our penchants, communicate all our passions to her. For several important reasons neither Noirceuil nor I can personally undertake the task we are entrusting to you; but Alexandrine could not be left in more capable hands."

That was the occasion the Minister mentioned the news of Noirceuil's nomination to one of the highest posts at the Court, and which fetched with it one hundred thousand crowns a year. "It was given him," Saint-Fond added, "at the same time the King conferred upon me another worth twice as much."

And while vice, impudent vice sped unerringly from one triumph to the next, fate went on just as steadily crushing whomsoever those mighty rascals deigned to make a victim of. Such was the situation; I pondered it at length. And all my observations, all my meditations conspired to depress ever lower the view I held of goodness, and to exalt my opinion of evil, again and again confirming me in my choice to dwell fast and secure in the bosom of crime and of infamy. . . . Ah my friends, I cannot well communicate to you the loathing I had of virtue.

I spent the following night with Alexandrine; no question about it, she was delicious. But I must nonetheless own that I beheld her so philosophically, sobriety to such a degree characterizing my senses, that it is difficult to give an account of the pleasures she yielded me: she roused my emotions scarcely at all. My ideas had gained such a prise upon me, the moral in me so thoroughly overmastered the physical, my indifference was such, my

self-possession so unshakable, that whether it was because of surfeit, or depravity, or sheer pigheadedness, I was able to have her naked ten successive hours in my bed and all that unremittingly and without a trace of feeling; here, I dare say, is an outstanding example of the benefits that accrue from stoicism. Steeling our soul against all that may stir it, by means of libertinage enuring it to crime, paring voluptuousness down to a purely carnal affair and stubbornly denying it any element of delicacy, the stoical training enervates the soul and from this state, wherein its native activity does not permit it to remain long, it passes into one of apathy which soon metamorphoses into pleasures a thousand times diviner than those frailties could procure it; though due to this toughness I have sought to represent, got me delights infinitely more trenchant than the ones which would have resulted from excitement or the dreary heats of love.

At any rate, to my consideration Alexandrine appeared quite as untaught morally as she was physically inexperienced; everything was still to be done for her heart and her mind.

"A great deal at first," she admitted, but she had become so used to it that it caused her no suffering any more.

Upon my demanding whether she had held conversation with anyone beside the Minister and Noirceuil, she told me Saint-Fond had obliged her to accept the attentions of one other man, and from her description I recognized Delcour.

She married Noirceuil, became pregnant one way or another; and the moral instruction I gave her having penetrated not very far, it was early on in the game she succumbed to the concerted villainy of her father and husband, perishing during a rout I did not attend because of events whose details I shall enter into shortly.

The girls whom I furnished to the Minister did not always cost me as much as I retailed them for, and it sometimes even happened that I earned money through their acquisition.

From a personage residing in the provinces I one day receive a letter, telling me that the government owes him half a million francs which he loaned the State during

the last war; his affairs have taken a catastrophic turn, for want of the sum aforementioned he has been brought to the worst extremes, he is faced by nothing short of starvation, he and his sixteen-year-old daughter, who, devoted to her as he is, he would marry with a part of the money if he could but recover his due. Knowing of my influence with the Minister he has been obliged to invoke my aid; all pertinent documents accompany his missive. I make enquiry, learn that what he advances is true; obtaining the funds will require intercession from a powerful source, but that they are owing to the claimant is beyond all question. Straightway I have the cash in hand I notify the latter that appropriate steps have been taken; but that his presence is indispensable; that success could only be accelerated by his arrival in the disbursor's office accompanied by a pretty young thing; in fine, I urge him to bring his daughter to town with him. The simpleton is taken roundly in; he appears at my door and with him, sure enough, he has one of the loveliest girls it has ever been my fortune to see. I lodged them in a place of safety, but did not keep them long in doubt of their fate: they were the principal ornaments at the next of the frolics I arranged each week for Saint-Fond. Already five hundred thousand francs in pocket and thanks to this newest piece of treachery now in the possession of the father and daughter, you will not, I suppose, be hard put to guess what employment I reserved for these spoils.

To complete this self-portrait, after figuring my perfidy I ought to represent my greed to you. With me greed went far: to the point, indeed, of usury. Once finding myself with eight hundred thousand francs worth of objects in pledge, objects which, had I auctioned them off, would not have fetched a fourth of that sum, I declared bankruptcy and the gesture sufficed to ruin twenty humble families who had deposited into my keeping all they had of value in exchange for pitiful sensualities, no more than enough to enable them to subsist and pursue the desperate toiling whence they earned practically nothing.

It had been some while since I had appeared in circles constantly surrounded by pleasures, I often did not know how to choose among them. No sooner did I enter than I was beset by suitors and paid a thousand compliments;

and it became quite clear that though I might have come there animated by ferocious intentions, the part I was going to have to enact was not the sacrificer's, but the victim's. A man in his early forties had me; to his ardors I responded with that minimum of interest courtesy demands; I remained very listless until my glance lit upon an extremely handsome nobleman. He was scarce a yard away; I ventured a few smutty comments, I noticed that they excited him, and that he was now devoting a good deal more attention to me than to the material he was using.

"Your style is far more to my liking than the one you saw me subjected to a moment ago," said I.

"I too am equally puzzled by the thing," Chabert admitted.

For it was Chabert, my friends, the very same who today is the fairest ornament in our little rural society, and whom you shall soon see playing a role in my adventures.

"In which case," said he, taking me by the hand, "let us remove to a boudoir, and I'll show you to what a degree our tastes are alike."

We established ourselves; Chabert was furnished like a mule; the nobleman himself was very respectably outfitted. I promised Chabert we would meet again, and stole off to the seraglios where, thanks to the stimulants I had just absorbed, I arrived in a fury.

It was soon afterward that I dined at the home of Noirceuil. His other guest, a striking figure of a man, was identified to me as the Comte de Belmor.

"Here is our new president," said Noirceuil. "The Comte assumes office today, and for his inaugural address he has promised us a discourse on love. Unless I am mistaken it will contain much to forearm the feminine heart against a sentiment which women only too often have the extravagance to conceive for men. And you, my friend," he continued, turning to Belmor, "allow me to introduce the famous Juliette to you. Have you met at the Sodality?"

"No," said the Comte, "I do not believe I recall having see madame—"

"Never mind," said Noirceuil, "you'll have become acquainted with her ere you leave. . . . Here is the fairest

. . . and the blackest—a personage of our own stripe, Comte. She shall be there to listen to you this afternoon; would you care to do anything before we dine? I am expecting Clairwil but, you know, it will be four o'clock ere she has completed her toilette. Since it is only three now, let me exhort you to step briefly into my boudoir, my valet will be at your orders."

Belmor consented; the valet arrived, and we all three encloseted ourselves.

When we quitted the boudoir. A perfectly heavenly Clairwil had just appeared; we betook ourselves to table.

"Juliette," Noirceuil said to me, "you must not think that the Comte's practices are limited to the mild little ritual you and he have just executed. You are our friend, this he knew. He behaved with the appropriate consideration."

"He is capable of sigular self-restraint," Clairwil put in.

"Are you then familiar, madame," I asked, smiling, "with what monsieur does when carried away? Do not leave me in ignorance, I beg of you; for I would fain be privy to everything concerning such an amiable gentleman."

"Comte," Noirceuil asked, "do you deem it fitting she be told?"

"Is it truly advisable? Such information must surely leave madame an unfavorable impression of my character."

"Reassure yourself," said Clairwil. "My friend is apt to seem you above all for the multiplicity and superlawdness of your vices."

"You see, what you and he have recently done is merely a diminutive version of his choice vagary; here again we find the general truth confirmed, that in a man the lesser quirk relates directly to the greater, and that to the discerning eye there is no lack of clues pointing to a man's predominating vice."

I exclaimed joyously, throwing my arms round the Comte's neck, "Your mania makes my head fairly reel; I entreat you to employ my bottom in connection with quantities of suchlike operations, and depend upon me to omit nothing that may contribute to the perfection of your ecstasies."

My lord gave me assurance that he would be calling upon me before the day was out.

"Just as I thought," said Clairwil, "I knew that in announcing your libertinage to her you were in no danger of displeasing Juliette."

Said Noirceuil: "Aye, temperance is a very foolish virtue, 'tis certain. Man is born for enjoyment, and through his debauches alone does he gain access to the sweetest pleasures of life. Only idiots are wont to deny themselves."

Now Clairwil: "For my part, I believe that we owe it to ourselves to indulge blindly in everything, and at all costs to pursue the happiness we situate in the midst of the extremest irregularities."

And the Comte: "Nature counsels man to seek it nowhere else; the inconstancy that has been provided him, urging him to broaden the range of his sensations every day, conclusively shows that the fairest lie out of the way of onerous routine. Woe betide them who, setting shackles on a man's passions while he is yet young, develop in him the habit of self-denial and thereby render him the most unfortunate of beings. What a terrifying disservice is thus done to him—"

"Let there be no mistake as to the aims of those who behave in this manner," Noirceuil interrupted; "doubt not that they are motivated by jealousy, by vindictivene . . . by fear lest others be as happy as those same pedants feel when they surrender to their own peculiar passions."

We had completed a most sumptuous meal and, t is hour being late, we went straight to the Sodality afom coffee. at

The inauguration of a president was accompanied by a curious traditional custom. The presidential chair was, as you know, upon an elevated platform; now, before it and below it, there was a large pouf placed, over it the new chief officer bent, and each Sodality member stepped forward in turn to kiss his ass. When he had gathered an homage from everyone, the Comte rose and mounted to his throne.

"Fellow members," he began, "*love* is the subject of the speech I have prepared for this august occasion. Although my remarks may appear to be addressed to men only, I

believe I may venture to say that they contain virtually everything a woman need hear, to ensure her protection against this grave peril."

Then, adjusting his dress, and silence descending upon the assembly, he expressed himself in the following terms:

"The word *love* is used to designate that deep-seated feeling which propels us, as it were despite ourselves, towards some foreign object or other; which provokes in us a keen desire to become united to it, to ever lessen the distance between it and ourselves . . . which delight us, ravishes us . . . renders us ecstatic when we achieve that union, and which casts us into despond . . . which tears us asunder whenever external considerations constrain us to rupture this union. If only this extravagance never led to anything more serious than pleasure, intensified by the ardor, the abandon inherent in it, it would merely be ridiculous; but as it leads us into a certain metaphysic, which, confounding us with the loved object, transforming us into it, makes its actions, its needs, its desires quite as vital and dear to us as our own, through this alone it becomes exceedingly dangerous, by detaching us from ourselves, and by causing us to neglect our interests in favor of the beloved's; by identifying us, so to speak, with this object, it causes us to assume its woes, its griefs, its chagrins, and thus consequently adds to the sum of our own. Meanwhile the dread of losing that object or of seeing its feelings for us pale and vanish, harries us unceasingly; and though at the outset we be in the serenest of states, this cross once become our burden we gradually sink into what is doubtless the cruellest that may be imagined on earth.

" 'Tis an intellectual construction . . . a mystification, an entirely fictitious, chimerical sensation, this delicacy we would introduce into the desire of enjoyment; it sometimes assumes considerable importance in the metaphysic of love; it's the same here as with all illusions, they embellish one another reciprocally. But delicacy is useless, even disruptive in all that pertains to the satisfaction of the senses: the complete inutility of love now becomes very evident, and the rational individual can no longer behold the object of his pleasures as anything more than an object which causes a sharp rise in the temperature of

the neural fluids, than a creature of precious little account *per se,* a creature whose function is simply to contribute to the purely physical satisfaction of the desires that have caught fire from the heat it has provoked in this neural fluid, and which, this satisfaction once given and received, loses, in the thinking man's eyes, all particular attributes, returning to its former anonymous place within its general class. Why should somebody else not have his turn too, and what will he lose in this creature that he cannot immediately find in another? No, it's solely the body I love, and it's the body alone whose loss I lament, though I can get another as good, just like it, whenever I please; how pointless now are my whinings, and how superfluous my regrets!

"If it is easy to demonstrate that love is nothing but a national superstition; that three-fourths of the world's societies, whose custom is to keep their females under lock and key, have never been subject to the ravages of this imaginative disorder; so now, in tracing this superstition back to its sources, we shall have little trouble assuring ourselves that it is merely an ailment, and arriving at the sure means for curing it. The inferiority of females to males is established and patent, there is nothing in their sex which can constitute a solid title to our respect; and love, begot of this blind respect, is, like it, a superstition.

"That which they call love is, in short, nothing else than the desire to enjoy; so long as it exists, women worship is of no help; so soon as it is satisfied, worship is impossible: which proves that it was certainly not from worship the respect was born, but the contrary. Glance at examples showing the lowly position women occupied in the past and yet occupy in a great many lands today, and you will conclude, if you are yet in any doubt, that the metaphysical passion of love is in no wise innate in man, but is the fruit of his false thinking and mistaken practices, and that the object which gave rise to this passion, generally scorned everywhere, ought never have blinded him.

"We fancy there is happiness to be found in the affection we fancy women to have for us; but that sentiment, always meretricious, is always measured out, so much,

so little, depending upon the need a woman calculates she has of us, or the sort of passion we flatter in her; let age whiten our hairs, or let there be an adverse shift in our fortunes, so that we can no longer serve her pleasures, her greed or her pride, and she abandons us upon the spot, frequently to become our most mortal enemy.

"To judge whether love be madness, is not the lover's distraction sufficient proof of it? or that fatal illusion he entertains, which causes him to ascribe such charms to the object he dotes upon and goes scampering about praising to the skies? Not a flaw that has not been rewrought into a virtue; not a defect that does not become a beauty; all that is ridiculous in her is changed into grace; ha! when the tempest subsides and the lover can coolly, open-eyed, inspect the contemptible object of his enthusiasms, must he not, as he blushes before his despicable error, at least make firm resolutions never to be misled in the future?

"The difference between a man and a woman, of this we may be perfectly confident, is quite as pronounced, quite as important as between man and ape; our grounds for refusing to include women in our species would be quite as valid as for refusing to consider the chimpanzee our brother. Next to a naked woman stand a man of the same age and naked too; now examine them attentively, and you will be at no pains to discern the palpable and marked difference which (sex aside) exists in the composition of these two beings, you will be obliged to conclude that woman is simply man in an extraordinarily degraded form: there are internal differences as well, and these are brought to light by anatomical comparison: the dissections should be performed carefully and simultaneously.

"What I have said of women, my brothers, may also be applied to men. Our defects are just as serious as theirs, and they are as unluckily moored to us as we to them, the putting on of any shackle is a folly, every bond is an attempt against the physical liberty which is our due, and which we ought to enjoy here on earth. And while I am wasting my time with this whatever it is, a hundred thousand others are growing old around me, who would much more merit my homage.

"And, further, is it a mistress who can satisfy a man? Is it then, as slave to his goddess' whims, whom he must labor to content, that he will be able to devote attention to his personal desires? Superiority is necessary in the pleasurable act; he of the two who shares his joy has less of it, he who obeys has none; get thee gone, idiotic delicacy which causes us to find charms . . . even in our sacrifices; these pleasure-takings, purely intellectual stunts, can they compare to those which involve our senses?

"Let us enjoy ourselves to the full: 'tis Nature's law; and as it is altogether impossible to love for long the object we enjoy, let us calmly accept that things be with us as they are with those creatures we sometimes unjustly deem inferior. When finished with her, do we observe the pigeon or the dog return and salute his companion? bow and scrape, kiss her paw or claw? If loves flares up inside a dog, this love, which could as well be called need, is nothing else than need; directly the bitch has satisfied him, indifference, aversion characterize his attitude towards her until he begins to desire again; but his desire will not be for the same female; all those he comes across will each in turn become the object of the inconstant male's attentions; and if a dispute arises, yesterday's favorite will be sacrificed like today's rival. Love thus being simply the taste describing the requirements of a given individual's organs, it is a physical impulse, neither more nor less, and with it delicacy of feeling, sophisticated modes of courtship, etc., can have nothing to do; for it is now plain that I love a blonde because she has attributes which establish close link with my senses; you love a brunette for similar reasons; and with both blonde and brunette, the material object becoming the instrument for the relief of our eminently material need, how are you going to apply your delicacy and your disinterest to this piece of plumbing? Do you fancy something metaphysical there? Then pride has induced you into prodigious error; a single glance should suffice to blast the illusion. Would you not call him mad, who in all earnestness insisted that he was fond of the sweet william's scent but indifferent to the flower? There is no

imagining into what incredible absurdities a man may tumble, who will become attached to and guided by every metaphysical mirage.

"But, and here I anticipate a possible objection, but this worship has existed throughout the ages; the Greeks and Romans deified Love and his mother. To this I reply, the thing may have come about with them as it did with us; in Greece and Rome women foretold the future also. Whence, probably, were born respect for them and from that respect, worship.

"*Love,* writes Voltaire, *is the imagination's embroidery upon Nature's homespun.* The aim of love, its desires, everything about it is physical; forever shun the object which would seem to demand anything more; absence and change are the sure remedies for love; one soon thinks no more about the person one has stopped seeing, and new delights effect the memory of old ones; regrets surrounding such losses do not long endure; irretrievable pleasures may of course engender bitter regrets, but those which are so easily replaced, those which are every moment reborn at every streetcorner, over these not a tear need be shed.

"What man dares suppose he will be able to captivate a woman's heart when he is past sixty? At sixty however, if he be soundly made, he has still another fifteen years' potential enjoyment ahead of him! Where can there be desire if it has not resistance to overcome? If then pleasure is only stirred up by the irritations of resistance encountered, and if the latter is only bred by aversion, it may become delicious to cause aversion, and all the caprices which disgust a woman may then become more sensual and a hundred times better than love . . . love, the absurdest of all follies, the most ridiculous, and doubtless the most dangerous, whereof I think I have given you adequate demonstration."

This dissertation was not, to be sure, very warmly received by the women present; but Belmor, who sought their praise with no more eagerness than he did their sentiments, was amply consoled by the masculine applause that rang out heartily everywhere in the hall; handing the presidential attributes temporarily over to

his predecessor, he made ready to reconnoitre the seraglios and exercise his authority there; Noirceuil, Clairwil and I met him at the foot of the platform, and we all started off together toward the side door. We were not halfway when a man of sixty halted Belmor, and asking to be allowed to express his congratulations, begged the favor of his ass; Belmor, unable to refuse, poised himself appropriately.

"There's a bit of unexpected luck," said the Comte.

"It is owing to your eloquence, my lord," Noirceuil assured him.

"Materialist that I am," said Belmor, "I'd prefer to owe it to my ass than to my ideas," and we entered the game preserve, laughing.

The president gave orders that during his inspection nobody be admitted into the premises apart from ourselves, who made up his escort; and he commenced his tour forthwith. Such a man, with such prepossessions, was able, as you may well imagine, to uncover a prodigious number of culprits; he was accompanied on his rounds by a quartet of executioners, two flayers, six flagellators and four gaolers: the first harem our procession entered was the one composed of women: to the lash he condemned thirty: the creatures thus sentenced were directed into the several chambers where, before suffering the penalties decreed, they were first made available to those libertines who, out of peculiarity of taste, might happen to repair thither for satisfaction. Four female subjects were condemned to the dungeons; regarding floggings, they were all meted out in our presence: the naked victim was led before the president, he would examine her, handle her for a little, a flagellator would then take her in charge, bend her over his knees; and when once she was in a position where she could not budge, a second flagellator, armed with a martinet, a cat-o'-nine-tails or some other instrument of the president's preference, would apply the number of strokes prescribed by him.

"Very well now," Noirceuil said, "let's turn to pleasures; that passion of yours, Belmor, will you set it forth into view?"

"That is my intention," said the Comte; "but dreadfull wrought up as I am, I mean an appallingly extensive vent to it."

"Excellent, we'll only enjoy it the more."

Whereupon the president required girls and, I having asked to play the part of one of them, he selected only nine: they were all from eighteen to twenty-one. Ten men, their eligibility determined by superiority of member alone, were appointed.

Clairwil was exhausted, as for Noirceuil, passably calm throughout, he had been content to watch affairs.

There at we separated. Noirceuil and Belmor returned to the seraglio of women and later report told of how they bagged another dozen victims of every description and by a wide variety of methods; whereas we, Clairwil and I, remained in the seraglio stocked with men.

But a few days consecutive to the infamies we had performed at the Sodality in the company of Belmor and his friend, our club's amiable president waited upon me and convinced me that Clairwil had not been mistaken, when she said he would be only too delighted to form a connection with me; the Comte, excessively rich, proposed fifty thousand francs a month for only two entertainments per week; Saint-Fond representing no obstacle, I saw no reason for not coming to an arrangement with Belmore. I told him, therefore, that I would be glad to be of service to him, but that the sum he offered would not even cover the costs of the suppers; the Comte heard me out and doubled his bid, agreeing to meet all additional expenses—which promised to be considerable, at each foregathering the libertine wishing to have three superb new women. The orgies once consummated, he would retire with me for another two or three hours of mutual sodo-masochism. Such were his conventions; the bargain was struck.

Without excepting Noirceuil and Saint-Fond, I have known few men so corrupt as Belmor; he was corrupt by temperament, through taste, and upon principle; his exceedingly criminal imagination often led him to invent things that surpassed all I had heard of, or even dreamt of, hitherto.

"This imagination you laud in me, Juliette," he said

one day, "O Juliette, how delicious are the pleasures of the imagination, and how voluptuously one follows out the lines of its dazzling constructions! Ah, dear angel, how little do they realize what we are about, what we originate, what we create during these divine intervals when our fiery souls are plunged utterly into impure depths, what raptures we experience as, we come erect erecting phantoms; nor with what ecstatic joy we caress them . . . elaborate them . . . surround them with a thousand obscene details and episodes. All the earth is ours in these enchanted moments; not a single creature resists us, to our aroused senses each affords the kind of pleasure which to our boiling imagination each appears capable of giving; we devastate the planet . . . and repeople it with new objects, and immolate these in their turn; the means to every crime is ours. . . . *Happy,* says La Méttrie, *happy they whose lively and wanton imagination keeps their senses ever whetted to the foretaste of pleasure!* Verily, Juliette, I sometimes think the reality possessed is not worth the images we chase thereof, and wonder whether the enjoyment of that which we have not, does not muchly exceed the enjoyment of that which is ours: lo, there is your ass, Juliette, there before my eyes, and beauteous it is to my contemplation; but my imagination, a more inspired architect than Nature, a more cunning artisan than she, creates other asses more beautiful still; and the pleasure I derive from this illusion, is it not preferable to the one which reality is about to have me enjoy?"

Little wonder then if with a mind like that, the Comte was prone to erratic flights; few men I had met had ever carried them to such lengths, and I had known few so attractive. But I have so many things still to recount to you that I cannot linger; let it suffice you to know that we did our worst, and that your conceptions of what that might be probably fall short of the truth.

"Juliette, I have just been given the address of a most unusual woman," Clairwil confided to me one day, "we must pay her a call: she is a fortune-teller and also blends poisons of all sorts, which she sells."

"And does she," I asked, "give the recipe for her poisons?"

"In return for fifty *louis*."

"They are reliable?"

"If you like she will make test of them in your presence."

"We must decidedly visit her. I have always been fond of the idea of poisoning."

"Ah, my dove, it is exquisite to have the lives of others arbitrarily in one's power."

"I am sure of it, for, would you believe it? You no sooner mentioned the thing than I felt a quivering in my nerves, a sudden flash of heat . . . Clairwil, I am quite certain that if you were to touch me now you would find me wet . . ."

"But Juliette," she said, knitting her brows, "did you not tell me Saint-Fond gave you an entire chest?"

I nodded.

"Well? What have you done with it?"

"There is none left and I dare not ask him for more."

"You mean you used it?"

"All of it."

"For his purposes?"

"Yes, a third of it. The rest for my passions."

"Delicious creature!"

"Oh Clairwil, you'll never be able to conceive the horrors I had achieved in this domain . . . the joys I have derived from performing these crimes. . . . A box of poisoned almonds in my pocket, I used to stroll disguised through the public gardens, along the boulevards, into brothels; I would distribute those fatal candies to all who crossed my path. Nature who, doubtless in provision for her own needs, had constituted me differently from others, would in the form of an unspeakable paroxysm reward an action which according to the belief of fools ought to have offended her."

"All perfectly understandable, my dear," Clairwil rejoined, "and the principles upon which we have been nourishing you for some time, Saint-Fond, Noirceuil and I, elucidate the workings and designs of Nature as regards this entire matter: it is no more extraordinary to come to the point you have reached, than to like to inflict beatings, it's the same pleasure but refined; and once it has been proven to us that from the commotion

of the pain experienced by others there results an impact upon our nervous system and in it a vibration which must perforce provoke lust, all possible means for causing pain become for us so many means for tasting pleasure; and starting out with little teasings we shortly arrive at execrations. Well, you have excelled your teachers, Juliette, I have perhaps imagined more than you, but I fear I have accomplished less—"

"Imagine more!" I exclaimed. "Blast my eyes, but what more can you have imagined?"

"I would like," Clairwil answered, "to find a lust which even when I had left off the doing of it, would go on having perpetual effect, in such sort that so long as I lived, at every hour of the day and as I lay sleeping at night, I would be constantly the cause of a particular disorder, and that this disorder might broaden to the point where it brought about a corruption so universal or a disturbance so formal, that even after my life was over I would survive in the everlasting continuation of my wickedness . . ."

"For the fulfilment of your aims, my dear," said I, "I know of little else than what may be termed moral murder, which is arrived at by means of advice, writings, or actions. Belmor and I have discussed this question together; here is a little computation he made just the other day, it suggests how rapidly contagion unfurls and how voluptuous it may be to cause, if it is true, as neither you nor I have any doubt, that as the crime becomes more atrocious, to that degree is the sensation enriched."

"Your Belmor must be delightful," Clairwil remarked.

"He is indeed," said I; "there are not many men so lovable, none more libertine—by the way, he will adore the purchases we are going to make; we shall have to resell them to him for their weight in gold—; and do you really believe that however we be devoted to a man, whatever be our relationship to him, do you really believe that notwithstanding all that we should constantly deceive him too?"

"Most certainly," was Clairwil's reply; "dealing with a man, we have the human nature in him to contend with,

and are obliged to proceed towards him as he always proceeds in our regard; and forasmuch as no man is frank, why would you have us be frank with them? You know, Juliette, on this head you are still of an incredible guilelessness: you are kindly, you are good-hearted, why, you respect men; whereas they must be used and deceived, and nothing else."

Our conversation, held in Clairwil's carriage while driving to a remote point on the edge of the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, was now broken off, for we were come to where the sorceress lived.

It was a little house, isolated and lying between court-yard and garden; one of our lackeys rang, an old serving-woman answered the door. Having learned our business she bade us first dismiss our coachman and attendants, suggesting we have them wait for us at a certain wineshop some distance away; the orders were given and she ushered us into a small chamber.

A quarter of an hour later Madame Durand appeared. Forty years of age, this was a very handsome woman, richly and gracefully made, tall, with a majestic presence, Roman features, a wondrous skin and large expressive eyes; her speech was seemly, her gesture measured; her look and manners contained everything that announces breeding, education and intelligence.

"Madame," my friend addressed her, "persons well in your acquaintance and whom you have satisfied, send us here. . . . First, we would have you say what the future holds in store for us, these twenty-five *louis* are in payment for that; next, we would have you provide us the wherewithal for controlling that future, I mean a complete assortment of the poisons you prepare. And there," Clairwil went on, tendering her fifty *louis* more, "is the sum you ordinarily ask for instruction in the composing of those same poisons, and for showing the beginner your laboratory and your garden of venomous plants. Be sure of it, our interest in these things is practical."

"Let me begin by saying," Durand replied, "that you are two extremely pretty women, and as such, before anything else, you shall have to undergo initial and

quite indispensable ceremonies which may perhaps displease you."

Clairwil enquired, in what did these ceremonies consist?

"You must accompany me into a dimly lit cabinet," said the sorceress, "where, once you have removed all your clothes, you shall be flogged by me."

"Come along," I said to Clairwil, "under circumstances like these one must demur to nothing."

The cabinet whereunto Durand led us was too unusual not to merit a description; and though for illumination there was but one smoky lamp, we could still discern objects well enough to make out their details. This cabinet, painted black, was about nine feet wide by twelve long: all along the wall to the right were alembics, stoves and other instruments of chemistry; to the left, shelves containing bottles and jars in great profusion, numerous books, there was a workbench, a stool; opposite us, at the farther end, hung a black curtain dividing this room from another; the curtain fell upon a divan, dividing it also, so that half the divan was in the cabinet, half in the room beyond; and there was, rising in the center, a velvet-covered wooden post to which Mme. Durand attached us, face to face.

"So then," this personage demanded, "are you resolved to suffer some pain to acquire the knowledge you seek?"

"Lay on, madame," we answered, "lay on, we are prepared for come what may."

At that Durand kissed each of us very amorously, gave our buttocks a friendly squeeze, and blindfolded us; and from this moment onward silence was observed: we were softly approached, by whom we could not be sure, and given fifty strokes each.

She sponged our behinds with water and vinegar, and asked us, had it hurt?

"Never mind," said we, "is there anything else that has to be done?"

The sorceress now had us stretch out side by side upon the divan; thanks to the curtain bisecting it, we were from the waist down in the cabinet, from the

waist up in the room adjoining. By means of a strap passed across our midriffs Durand fixed us to the couch: unable to sit up, we would be unable to make out with whom we were having to do. She, half nude herself, had settled near us. And that same instant, we were borne aloft, divan and all.

We found ourselves in a largely unfurnished room which, judging from the time we took ascending there, seemed very high up; no more curtain separating our heads from our bodies now; another machinery had conveyed Durand, she was there also. A big table was in the room, ranged upon it were numerous parcels resembling those enveloping drugs in a pharmacy; and also in this room were a great many more jars and bottles than we had seen in the other.

"It is here I pronounce opinion," said Durand.

And she undid the strap pinioning us.

"You, Clairwil," she began, looking hard into the dish containing her blood, "and you see that I know your name, without anybody having told me it; you, Clairwil, shall live only five years longer; but for the excesses you indulge in you would be able to live to sixty: your fortune shall increase as your health declines, and *the day the Bear moves into the Scales you shall regret the flowers of springtime.*"

"I do not understand."

"Write down my words and the day will come when their meaning shall be very clear."

At this my friend seemed worried.

"As for you, Juliette—and, pray tell me, who ever could have given me your name?—you, Juliette, shall be enlightened by a dream, an angel will appear to you, he will divulge incomprehensible truths; but between now and then I may foretell this: *when vice doth cease woe shall betide.*"

And now a thick cloud filled the room. Durand fell into a trance, she shrieked, did strange contorsions, in doing them shook off the little that still adorned her lovely body; the cloud having dissipated, she returned to her senses. That vapour had left an odor of mingled amber and sulphur in the air. Our clothes were restored

to us; once we were dressed Durand asked us, what kinds of poison did we desire?

"Your prediction distresses me," said Clairwil; "death inside five years!"

"Ah, who knows? Maybe you will avoid it," Durand replied, "I told you what I saw in your fate, my eyes sometimes deceive me."

"Let me cling to that hope, else I must truly despair," said Clairwil; "but perhaps she errs in another direction and I have only a week to live? Eh then, madame, be quick about it, show me your wares; open your jars, let us see the weird plants in your garden: explain to us all the properties of all these lethal things, we'll set aside those which please us, and you can dress a reckoning afterward."

"I must have twenty-five *louis* more," quoth the witch, "that is the fee for admission to my exhibits; later you will pay for the separate items you select, according to the rate of each. You may wish to experiment them, you will of course be at liberty to do so: those two little girls are at your disposal and if they do not suffice I will furnish you, at fifty *louis* a head, as many men as you like."

"You are delightful, madame," I exclaimed, throwing my arms round Durand's neck, "I am so happy we consulted you, and I am certain you shall be happy to have us for clients."

Taking down the jars from the shelves one at a time, she began by showing us aphrodisiacs and love-philtres as well as other anti-aphrodisiac purgatives. We had an ample store of the former done into packages, amongst them goodly amounts of cantharides, ginseng, and several vials of Joui liqueur, from Japan, for which, because of its rarity and its unusual virtues, Durand charged us ten *louis* an ounce.

"And to my list, some larger flasks of the latter," said Clairwil, "they will be helpful to me in my dealings with lots of men."

"We now come to the poisons," said Durand; "if it is sometimes pleasant to labor at propagating the human species, it is more often delicious to hinder its progress."

"Kiss me," said Durand, "ah, here are two women of the stripe I adore. The better we come to know one another, the better, I am convinced of it, we shall get on."

These poisons were in very great number, each classified according to its category. In the first we examined, Durand drew our attention to a powder where the basic ingredient was vert toad; what she related of its effects was so exciting to hear, that we besought Durand to make a trial of it there and then.

"Gladly," said she, "designate the victim." And after having detached the girl we pointed to, she wondered whether we fancied having her raped by a man, and poisoning her meanwhile; we rejoiced in this suggestion. Wherewith Durand rang, and in answer to her call appeared a tall individual, lank, pale and nervous, some fifty years of age and in a very neglected state.

"There," I whispered to my companion, "he's the one sported with us a little while ago, I'm certain of it."

Clairwil nodded. "I think you're right."

" 'Tis an old sylph," Durand replied, "by pronouncing a formula I can cause him to disappear. Would you care to see it done?"

"Yes."

Durand uttered two barbarous words which I was unable to retain; where Alzamor had been there was now only smoke.

"Now make the sylph return," said Clairwil.

Another outlandish phrase and a second cloud brought him back; this personage proceeded to give evidence of prodigious vigor, in two minutes he had perforated a girl's maidenhead.

Durand resumed the displaying of her goods, and after having indicated the features of the second category of poisons, "Here," she said, "is burnt engri flesh, the engri is a variety of Ethiopian tiger; its effect is subtle, awful, and deserves to be witnessed by ladies as curious as yourselves."

"Then let us try some out," Clairwil said, "but upon a young man."

"Of what age precisely?"

"Of eighteen or twenty."

We deposited five golden coins and there in a trice stood a youth, comely, prettily made, superbly membered, but showing such signs of privation as to leave us in no doubt of the class amongst which our sorceress chose her victims.

"Shall you care to amuse yourselves with him?" Durand wanted to know.

"Yes," said I, "but will you not join us? He looks capable."

"What's this? You are of a mind to see me passionate?"

"We most decidedly are."

"I'm beastly, you will be appalled."

"Fie, slut," said Clairwil, clasping her in her arms, "do your damnable worst—we expect it of you, for you are a woman after our own sort and we are burning to see you in action."

And without further ado Clairwil shoots towards the young man and begins to arouse him forthwith. Here were symmetry and luxuriant abundance in perfection, never was flesh so firm, so fair, so responsive to the touch; never were buttocks and breasts so smooth, so round, so full.

The whore then began to wriggle and cavort in the most lubrical manner, Clairwil and I furnished fuel to her ecstasy. There is no conceiving the ardor of that woman's imagination, the foulness of her talk, the originality of her lewd ideas and the wildness of their incoherence; in fine, the disorder which, established by the incredible heat of her passions, reigned throughout her entire person.

"Poison him, poison him!" she screamed as delirium invaded her senses and mounted into her brain.

Durand emitted dreadful screams, howls; all her limbs twitching, thrashing, she succumbed to a nervous fit.

Pots of poison from the third category were then disposed on the counter before us.

Among others it includes the poison royal, the same which in the days of Louis XV brought about the deaths of so many members of his family; poisoned darts and hatpins; the poisons compounded of snake venoms and known under the names of cucurucu, Kobob and of Aimorrhoües; polpoch poison, so called after the reptile

that inhabits a northwestern zone in faraway Jupatan.

"I mix it with a digestive or cordial," Durand explained; "diluted in the proportion of one drop to a pint it remains absolutely fatal; in all my experience I have never known it to fail; would you like to see what it can do?"

"By all means yes," I replied, "rest assured that such proposals are of a kind we are never apt to reject."

"And what would you prefer in the way of a victim?"

"An attractive young man," Clairwil volunteered.

Durand rang a little bell and there before us appeared a young man, fairer than the previous one, and in the same state of dejection and misery.

The hard-pressed victim soon is staggering like a drunkard and while we look on gradually sinks into a terrifying vertigo; the venom's impact upon his brain was so fierce, that, in shrieks, he complained of having his head full of boiling oil; this phase was followed by a generalized tumefaction that spared no part of his body, his face became livid, his eyes bulged from their sockets, and flailing his arms like one drowning in the sea, the wretch fell to the floor and writhed and struggled there in the oddest possible manner.

"For me," said Clairwil, "that is the most divine of all passions, the one I shall never be able to resist. In future I am resolved to indulge in it every chance I get."

"Come with me to the garden," she said, and then added, a note of apology in her voice; "you may have whatever you like there. And I am afraid there is not very much: the frosts were so severe last winter that most of my plants died."

"The possibilities," said I, "of libertinage here in your house, they exist—of this we are sure. What can you propose to us—for we are exceedingly libertine—"

"There is not a single passion," replied Durand, "not a single whim or fancy, not a living being on this globe, not an extravagance or eccentricity however unusual or picturesque it be, that cannot be enjoyed here; merely give me several hours' forenotice, I will procure you anything under the sun; let your desire be irregular, let it be fantastic, and this in no matter what degree, I solemnly promise to provide you the means to execute it. Nor is

that all. If there be any men or women anywhere in the world, with whose tastes or practices you were eager to be acquainted, I will have them here; and unseen by them, you will watch them in action through a gauze curtain. This entire house is mine, the ease wherewith on all four sides it may be entered or left without being seen, its secluded location, the height of the enclosure girting it, in a word, its mysterious loneliness, these, I think, guarantee both security and pleasure, which should be carefree; so command and you will be served: all individuals, all races, all nations, all sexes, all ages, simply specify what you wish—any debauchery: you have but to choose. You pay well, this I know; and with money anything can be had in my establishment."

"And yet you must not be in any great need of it, madame, your wealth must be immense."

"Yes," Durand conceded, "but I too have tastes and as I spend virtually everything I earn, I am not by a long shot as rich as you might think. . . . Yes, ladies, yes, strictest secrecy and unlimited facilities, such are the features of this place; "one hundred *louis* per male," said Durand, "and you will be satisfied."

"For my part I'll have two girls," said I, "since I only like to do to my sex what this whore likes to do to men; I shall be whipped throughout the operation . . ."

"Fifty *louis* per girl," said Durand.

We took out our purses and in less than ten minutes everything was under way.

I am provided a charming girl, naked and her hands tied behind her back; a similar subject for sacrifice, but of masculine sex, is produced for my companion: we begin by flogging them with nettles, then with our martinets, the work is already well advanced when it is interrupted by a knock on the door: 'tis Durand, who had stepped out of the room and now returns: "The gentleman outside," she says, "requests you to prolong the torture, and to turn slightly to this side while you operate: he would like a better view until now he has been unable to judge."

"Go, and say it will be as he wishes," Clairwil replied.

We resumed.

Clairwil set up a howl of pleasure. "Juliette," she gasped, "try it, Juliette, try it, there's nothing to equal the sensation."

"Kind friends," Durand said to us then, "there is yet something I would propose to you."

"Do not hesitate."

"Will you help me make fifty *louis?*"

"Certainly. Of course."

"Then have the goodness to receive an admirer for a moment; he has been watching you, your doings fascinate him and he is burning from eagerness to make your more intimate acquaintance."

"Very well," said I, "but we too wish to be paid, no money is more enjoyably spent than what one earns in a whorehouse; simply ask him for a hundred *louis,* that leaves twenty-five for each of us."

"I am of my companion's mind," said Clairwil; "but what would the fellow do with us? One must not take payment for nothing."

"Ah," said Durand, "you will not be disappointed, he is extremely libertine; nonetheless, he is aware that you are ladies of condition, and will treat you with fitting consideration."

"Send him in," said I, "let him only pay and not trouble to consider us, we are whores and intend to be treated as such."

In they walked; 'twas first a little man of some sixty years, short, stout, almost naked, with the opulent look of a financier; another followed hard on his heels.

"Lovely . . . lovely," he cried, "ah, ladies, you have done remarkable things . . . How would you like to begin again? We shall do the same together."

No sooner was he finished than, without so much as a word to us, he was gone out of the room. See there an example of the effects of libertinage upon a timid soul. It is ever the same: because such people, unable to forge principles to themselves, always suppose they have behaved ill because they have not behaved quite like everybody else.

"And who was that queer fellow?" we asked Mme. Durand.

"An exceedingly wealthy man," she answered, "but I shall not give you his name: you would not be pleased to have me publicize yours."

"His practices go no farther than what we have just seen?"

"Today he was visibly not in form. You say he impressed you as being unsure of himself? You were not mistaken, he is indeed shy, overly scrupulous."

"Poor fool, he is truly to be pitied. If you cannot first conquer vulgar prejudices, better not venture into our way of life at all; for, once having elected it, he who dares not advance with determined step is heading for a great many embarrassments."

And after putting our clothes straight, we wrapped up our purchases, made this valuable new acquaintance a generous settlement, and returned to our carriage, both of us determined to cultivate Durand and make the most extensive and frequent use of the supplies we had bought from her.

I was eager to introduce Belmor to Durand: they struck me as made for each other. At our next encounter I mentioned her name; no, he was not acquainted with her; we agreed to call upon her together, and we went. After offering my excuses for having neglected her so dreadfully —I had not indeed been back since that first visit, lack of a free moment was the reason—I presented the Comte to her, and the welcome she gave him was warm. Enchanted by everything he saw there, and after some heavy purchasing, he succumbed to the voluptuous titillations that stunning personage was causing in him.

"Sir," said the sorceress, "let me offer my felicitations, that passion of yours is charming; if you care to visit me again the day after tomorrow, I shall enable you to observe one of approximately the same sort, although a thousand times more spectacular."

We came faithfully to the rendezvous; but nobody came to open the door. The shutters, we then noticed, were drawn over the windows, the house seemed deserted; and we went away. Despite the great many enquiries I made, I was never able to discover what became of that remarkable woman.

Nothing very out of the ordinary befell me in the course of the next two years; I lived higher than ever before, my debauches multiplied, and finally brought me to the point where I lost all tastes for the simpler pleasures of Nature; to the point where if there was not something exceptional in the frolics which were proposed to me, I could not even feign an interest in them. It is likely that when we reach this stage of numbed indifference, virtue makes a final effort inside us, whether because in our exhaustion we are so reduced that her voice reassumes its authority in the face of our torpor, or because, through a natural desire for change, we, bored with debaucheries, wish to try a little of the contrary; whatever the case may be, this is the moment, beware of it, when long-forgotten prejudices reappear, and if they overtake somebody who has already traveled far in a vicious career, and gain the upper hand over him, the unhappiness they cause is terrible; there is nothing worse than to limp back in defeat and dishonor.

I had just attained my twenty-second year when Saint-Fond broached another of his corrupt schemes to me. I shuddered; O thou the fatal start I gave, what wert thou not to cost me! Little impulse, why could I not have suppres'd thee?—Saint-Fond caught it with his searching eye. He turned and went away without a word.

I watched him go and when the door was shut and the sound of his footsteps died away, waited there yet a certain while; then, for it was late, retired for the night. Long did I lie awake; once fallen asleep I had a troubling dream: in it I saw a fearful figure putting a torch to my belongings—to my furniture, to my house, to everything I owned—: all was afire and in the midst of it a young creature stretched forth her arms to me . . . sought desperately to save me, and in the attempt perished herself in the flames. I awoke all a-sweat; and consciousness brought back to me the sorceress' prediction: *when vice doth cease,* thus she had spoken, *woe shall betide.* O heaven, I cried in my heart, I stopped being vicious for a fleeting instant, I shuddered at a proposed horror; misfortune is about to engulf me, 'tis sure. The woman I saw in my dream, she is the sister, the unregenerate and sad Justine with whom I fell out

because she was bent on taking the virtuous way; virtue appeals to me, and in my heart vice falters. . . . Fatal prognostic . . . and you who could explain it to me and tell me what I should do, you disappear just when my need of your advice is greatest . . . I was still at grips with these lugubrious reflexions when, all unannounced, a stranger enters my bedroom, tenders me a note, and then steals away. I recognize Noirceuil's hand. "You are ruined," it reports to me, "never would I have expected frailty in her whom I formed and whose conduct heretofore has been flawless; seek not to repair the want you have exhibited of zeal: it is too late: Your impulse betrayed you, and add not insult to injury by supposing the Minister can be further duped. Leave Paris ere this day is out; take with you the money you may have by you; count not upon anything else. Everything you have acquired through Saint-Fond's largesses and aid is forfeited; he is a powerful man, this you know, you also know his wrath when he has been failed: so do not tarry, go. And go with lips sealed: you will not outlive an indiscretion. I leave you the ten thousand *livres* a year you have from me, your draughts will be honored anywhere. Now fly, and to your friends say nothing."

A bolt of lightning would have smitten me less cruelly; but dread of Saint-Fond affected me even more strongly than despair. I rise hurriedly from my bed; having deposited all my valuable and all my savings with Saint-Fond's notary, I dare not go reclaim them. I ransack drawers, turn purses inside out: five hundred *louis,* 'tis all I can assemble, 'tis all I have left: I make several rolls of the notes and hide them upon my person, and then, alone, on foot, in the middle of the night I go quaking out of this house where yesterday I dwelt like an empress, this house upon which I cast one last backward glance, tears in my eyes. . . . Whither shall I go? To see Clairwil. . . . But no, it has been prohibited; and moreover is it not she who has betrayed me? is it not she who wishes to usurp my place? Ah, how unjust we are rendered by misfortune, and how wrong I was, as you shall soon see, in rushing to suspect the best friend I had.

"Come now, take hold of yourself, let's not rely for help upon anybody but ourselves. . . . I'm still young,"

I said to myself, "it's merely a question of starting afresh; I have learned from my youthful errors. . . . O fatal virtue! thou tricked me once; never fear, I'll never again come under thine execrable sway. Only one fault have I committed, only once have I slipped, and it was an infernal impulse of probity that tripped me. Let's now snuff it out forever within us, virtue is man's most mortal enemy, capable of procuring him nothing but his doom; and the greatest mistake which can be made in a completely corrupted world is to want to put up a lonely fight against the general contagion. And, how often have I told this to myself!"

Without anything like a definite plan in mind, concerned only to escape the vengeance of Saint-Fond, I jumped, as though mechanically, into the first public carriage I found; it was the mail-coach for Angers; in due time I arrived there. Never having been in this city before, not knowing a soul there, I decided to rent a house and to open it for gaming: the nobility from all the countryside around soon came flocking to me. . . . A certain Comte de Lorsanges, the same by whose name I still go today, looked to me to be more assiduous and a great deal richer than the others: he was then forty years of age, pleasing of face and figure; and from his manner of expression I was convinced his intentions were loftier and more legitimate than his competitors': I heeded his attentions. It was not long before the Comte confided his designs to me: a bachelor, enjoying an income of fifty thousand *livres* a year, having no near relations, he, if I were to prove worthy of his hand, would prefer to have me inherit his wealth than have it passed on to some distant kin; and if I were willing to be frank with him, to describe my life in fullest detail, omitting nothing, he would wed me and accord me twenty thousand a year. A proposal such as this was too fair not to accept at once: it was a complete confession the Comte must have, it was a complete one he got.

"Listen to me now, Juliette," spoke up M. de Lorsange once I had terminated my recital, "the avowals you have just made me evidence an openness I admire; she who owns her sins so candidly is far nearer to never sinning

again than she who has been faultless all her life; the former knows what to expect—and the latter may at any time fall prey to the desire to essay something new. Deign to listen to me a little, madame, I insist that you do, to me your conversion were a precious thing, I want to guide you into the righteous path; I do not propose to upbraid you in a sermon, no, but to put certain truths before you, truths your passions screened long from your sight, and which you will always find in your heart whenever you wish to inspect it alone.

"O Juliette! he who was capable of telling you that morals are useless in the world, set for you the cruellest trap into which it were possible to snare you, and he who was then able to add that virtue is futile and religion a fraud might better have assassinated you there and then, and been done with it. Killing you outright, he would have caused you only an instant's suffering; instead, he readied you for griefs and woes beyond number; the misuse of words and the twisting of meanings were responsible for all your errors, let us now strive to make a just analysis of this virtue wicked teachers sought to make you hate. That which is called virtue, Juliette, is constant fidelity in the fulfilment of our obligations towards others; I ask you now, what person can be so thoughtless, so unfeeling as to venture to situate happiness in that which shatters all the ties that bind us to society? Is he so bold as to imagine he alone has passions? And if all the others have them as surely as he, how can he hope to cow the rest into putting theirs into abeyance and serving his only? You will agree with me, Juliette, no one but a madman can entertain such ideas; but even supposing he is ceded to, is he sheltered from the law?

"That which is excessive, that which affects for a brief instant only, must it not seem poor indeed beside a pure, mild and enduring pleasure? The hatred and the curses of our fellow man, can they outvalue his love and blessings? O immoral and warped spirit, are you immortal, are you unimpressionable? do you not drift like us upon this peril-strewn sea of life, and have you not our own need of rescuers the day you drive upon a rock? think you men will heed your call after you have insulted

them? and do you think yourself a God, to be able to dispense with men?"

I listened to that sensible man. . . . My stars! said I to myself, this must surely be the angel Durand alluded to, and these the incomprehensible truths that were to be divulged to me . . . and I pressed the hand of this new-found friend: tears were gathering in his eyes, he hugged me gently to his breast—"No, my lord," said I, hanging my head, "I do not feel worthy of the happiness you hold out to me . . . my sins are too many, my fate cannot now be reversed."

"They who have loved you only for your vices," he replied, "because their own found stuff there to feast upon, they spoke to you in no such terms as I have used: nobody but the friend of your soul would take it upon himself to address you thus, and you will pardon these affusions, they stem from my ardent desire to see you happy."

Needless to say, my friends, Monsieur de Lorsange's pretty little diatribe persuaded me of nothing unless it were his innocence and striking inaptitude as a controversialist. For indeed, what grossly inadequate means were these for swaying someone whom the habit of logic had by now rendered inaccessible to prejudice or superstition, and what more ludicrous than to establish the necessity of virtue to human happiness—and this for my benefit! Virtue, eh! Whence came all my misfortunes if not from my weakness in having listened to it for one accursed instant; I must get me out of the mire and back onto the road of prosperity, Lorsange's hand is indispensable to that end; so let's seize it, and never mind the rest; let guile and treachery be the weapons I place heaviest reliante upon, the weakness of my sex dictates the choice of them and my individual principles must make them the basis of my character.

My skill as a liar, acquired over long years of practice, being such that I could dissemble with ease and success in any circumstances whatsoever, I put on the appearance of believing Lorsange's point of view and counsels; I ceased receiving people in my house, each time he called on me he found me alone, sewing, and so wonderful was the progress he was making towards the salvation of my

soul that I was soon noticed at mass. Lorsange tumbled happily into the trap; the twenty thousand *livres'* annuity was written out to me and the marriage contract signed a mere six months after I had first set foot in the city of Angers. As I was on good terms with the neighborhood, and as my former errors were known to nobody there, Monsieur de Lorsange's choice was generally applauded and I saw myself mistress of the finest house in town. Hypocrisy restored to me an affluence which dread of crime had stripped me of not long before; and here again stood vice at the top of the tree. Oh my friends, say what they will, it shall ever be so until humanity's final hour.

There is little I can relate touching my conjugal pleasures with Monsieur de Lorsange; of these the good man was acquainted with none but the most banal; as untaught in lubricity as in philosophy, during the two dreary years I spent as his wife, the poor devil never once took it into his head to vary his routine: soon suffocating from the monotony of it, I put out a watchful eye to see whether this city might not have something in the way of satisfactions to offer, I had no particular requirements as to sex and provided it gave signs of imagination and verve the object could be of any sort. I was long in searching; the strait and strict upbringing one encounters in the provinces, the moral rigidity, the mediocrity of the population, that also of its means, everything complicated my efforts, everything posed an obstacle to my pleasures. A daughter of one of my husband's oldest friends, was the first I seduced. Caroline, intrigued by the originality of my remarks, suborned by the immorality of my systems, quickly yielded to my desires: but Caroline, who was only beautiful, might well once have, but could hardly hold someone who, like myself, had to be roused through the imagination; whereof the dear girl possessed none at all. Brief was our idyll; I shortly found somebody else, abandoned her for a third. Yes, attractive women did not entirely lack in Angers, but how dull were their minds—never a hint of friskiness. O Clairwil, how longingly I thought on you, how greatly you were missing to my happiness! I tried men, met with

hardly better luck; I was on my tenth when one day I thought I recognized Chabert with whom I had had some agreeable connections at the Sodality of the Friends of Crime. Monsieur de Lorsange leaves; I request a word with Chabert. We removed at once into a secluded garden; and there the amiable nobleman, after having congratulated himself upon this stroke of good fortune and expressed his delight at seeing me again, told me that large benefices he possessed here and compelled him to keep under cover but that I should not be misled by his smirks and antics, bowing and scraping are enjoined to politics and cannot be avoided; that his way of thinking, views and habits were quite what they had always been, and that he would be only too happy to give me proof thereof at the first convenient opportunity. I for my part recounted what had befallen me; he having arrived in Angers but a week before, he had not known of my presence there, and reiterated his desire that we amply renew our acquaintance.

"Sir," said I, "need we delay? The gates are shut, these flowers will serve as our couch; make haste, reconcile me with pleasures over the loss of which I weep every day. Will you believe it? Ever since coming to this wretched town, not one of the persons to whom I have surrendered has so much as thought to look at my body, I who cherish none but those attacks, and who behold all other pleasures as necessarily accessory or incidental to that one."

"Why very well then, let us indulge in it," said Chabert, turning me so that my belly was resting against the roses, raising my skirts from behind. "Ah Juliette," cried he after a moment spent admiring me, "you still are Aphrodite's own."

The nobleman inclines, he kisses me; 'tis most inspiring to feel his mouth all over. Ah, my good friends, my pleasure was beyond description; it is cruel to interrupt sinful habits, it is heavenly to resume them. During my enforced abstinence from this kind of pleasure I had felt the most violent need of it, this had manifested itself in the form of itchings so keen, so insistent that to soothe them I had had to resort to scratchings and scrapings with whatever instrument lay ready to hand; Chabert gave me a new lease on life.

"There's no substitute for it, sex has no equal—there's my opinion," said he. "Or do you not agree?"

"Oh Chabert, can you ask such a question? We must see one another often, my dear."

"We shall, Juliette, heaven be my witness, we shall. And I would that you were doubly content at having encountered me again."

"What do you mean?"

"I have friends."

"And, you scoundrel, you intend to prostitute me to them?"

"With attributes and proclivities like yours, you were better suited to the role of a whore than the one you are enacting at present."

"I am touched by what you say, it is a mark of recognition. 'Tis a sad part to play in the world, that of an honest wife. Women are built for impudicity, born for it, and those of them who remain prudes throughout and in spite of all, are fit only for ridicule and scorn."

Chabert knew my husband and described him as a bigot; he urged me to seek some compensation for the austerities of the marital couch. Having overheard someone say that M. de Lorsange was to depart the next day for one of his estates, he advised me to take advantage of his absence to come and partake in, at a country dwelling of his whither he would escort me, a replica of our Parisian debauches.

" 'Tis a wicked thing you are doing," said I, rallying the nobleman, "you are unsettling all my plans for virtue. Say now, is it right for you to flatter my passions? should you thus pave for me the way to crime? ought you lure his wife away from a husband? Ah, your conscience will answer for it; it is time you halt your wicked machinations. The harm is not yet done, I have but to consult a spiritual guide less perverted than you, he will teach me how to resist such criminal desires; he will show me that they are the product of a perverse soul, explain to me that, in submitting to them, one dooms oneself to eternal remorse, to remorse of the very bitterest as there are evil deeds for which there is no possible reparation. He will not, like you, advise me that I am at liberty to do anything, that I have nothing to fear; he will not en-

courage me to wild conduct by raising hopes of impunity, he will not cheer me on to betraying my husband—a gentle husband, wise, pious, good, who sacrifices himself for his wife. . . . Oh no, no, 'twill be contrary of that."

"Ah Juliette," said Chabert as we parted, "wrong-headed as ever, and just as engaging. Here in this solitude and bleakness where we live, 'tis a treasure I have found in finding you."

I arrived punctually at the rendezvous, Chabert and I set off for his retreat; apart from ourselves, there were gathered there four men and four women. Among the latter were three with whom I had held voluptuous commerce previously; whilst the four men were carnal strangers to me. He gave us merrily and plentifully to eat and drink, and we gorged ourselves on libertinage too. No need to describe that party to you, nor the eight or ten others which followed it during my stay at Angers. You are weary of descriptions, and henceforth I shall spare you all but those which exceptional crimes or other singularities render worthy of your hearing.

Before advancing with my story I must mention a few vital details which cannot longer be omitted. Eleven months after my marriage to the Comte de Lorsange I presented him with a charming baby girl; bearing the child was a struggle for me, but shrewdness won out in the end. The measure was essential: I had to consolidate my claims to the fortune of the man who had given me his name. I could not do this without a child—but was it fathered by my virtuous husband, that's what you are wondering, isn't it now, prying busybodies that you are? Well then, allow me to make you the same reply Madame de Polignac made to Monsieur in answer to the same indiscreet questions: *Oh my lord, when one ventures into the midst of a thicket of rosebushes, how is one to tell by which thorn one has been pricked?* But do you suppose Lorsange bothered to enquire? He accepted everything, jibbed at nothing; the honor and the burdens of paternity devolved upon him, did my greed require anything more? This little daughter, whom my husband named Marianne, was completing her first year and I my twenty-fourth when, taking deep and long

counsel with myself, I decided I had no alternative but to leave France. From anonymous correspondents I had received warnings that Saint-Fond, whose star was only continuing to rise at the Court and who was in apprehension of a damaging indiscretion from me, regretted not having clapped me away into a place of safety, and that he was having me sought after everywhere. Fearing lest my change of name and condition prove insufficient camouflage, I resolved to put the Alps between the Minister's hatred and me: but there were ties binding me, they had to be dissolved; could I make my escape so long as I was under a husband's thumb? Here was something that had to be remedied and I began to lay my plans. I hatched my plot to the tune of acute spasms of joy, and prospects of others goaded me towards its speedy execution. I had half a dozen pinches left of each poison bought from Durand; to my tender spouse I administered a strong dose of the royal variety, both out of respect for his aristocratic person, and because the time which was to elapse between the envenoming and the death of the beloved would screen me from all possible suspicion.

Never was there a sublimer death than that of Monsieur de Lorsange; his acts and sayings were elevated, they were exemplary; his bed-chamber turned into a chapel where sacraments of all sorts were celebrated continually. He exhorted me, he preached to me, he bored me; recommended to me the little daughter he thought was his, and hemmed in by three or four confessors breathed his last. Truly, had all that dragged on another two days, I believe I would have left him to die all by himself. The respect and care allegedly due to the dying comprise another social obligation which makes no sense to me. One ought undoubtedly to take the fullest possible advantage of a living creature; but as soon as Nature, afflicting it through maladies, advises us that she has initiated the process of recuperating that creature, rather than risk infringing her laws we must let her operations take their course; we may hasten them, yes; but interfere with them, never. In short, the sick must be abandoned to their own devices; place a few objects inside their

reach that may bring them relief, if you like, then proceed about your business. It is unnatural for a healthy individual to go and breathe, before his appointed time and in open violation of Nature's intentions as they regard him, the contaminated air of a sick-room, and to expose himself to falling ill too, all in order to do something unlawful: nothing being more criminal in my opinion that to venture to force Nature to desist or retreat; and always acting according to my principles, I may assure you that I shall never be seen nursing the sick, nor comforting them in any way whatsoever. Nor do I wish to be told that it is my harshness of character which is responsible for this attitude of mine; it comes from nowhere but my intelligence, and my intelligence rarely deceives me where the issue is philosophical.

My very chaste husband interred, I went gladly into mourning for him; no widow, I am told, was ever so becoming in her weeds, but even more delicious than wearing this lugubrious attire was to become the owner of four fine estates evaluated at fifty thousand *livres* a year in rents, plus the one hundred thousand francs in specie I found in my husband's coffers.

"More than enough here for my Italian journey," said I, transferring the bundles of banknotes from the deceased's money-box into mine, "and there's the hand of fate, friendly to crime as always and crowning it once again in bestowing her blessings upon one of crime's most devoted disciples."

It turned out that Chabert had traveled widely in Italy and was able to furnish me a quantity of glowing letters of recommendation. In exchange, I left my daughter in his wardship; he promised to take the very best care of her—my concern for the child was of course motivated by material considerations rather than by any motherly affection, such there being neither any place in my heart for such a sentiment, nor any justification for it in my beliefs. For lust-objects I took along only a tall, well-shaped and pretty lackey by the name of Zephyr, to whom I had frequently played Flora, and one chambermaid, Augustine, eighteen years of age and heavenly to behold. Accompanied by these two trusty

individuals, by another woman of no consequence, some baggage and my well-filled treasury, I boarded a coach and without stopping save for the night and for meals, sped at a merry clip all the way to Turin.

# TOME IV

"And so here I am at last," said I, drawing deep breaths of free air, "in this so interesting region of Europe, this Italy that has always attracted the curious, here am I in the home of Neros and of Messalinas; perhaps upon this hallowed soil they used once to tread I shall capture the spirit of those paragons of crime and debauchery, and be able to duplicate the atrocities of Agrippina's incestuous son, and the lubricities of Claudius' adulterous wife." The idea prevented me from sleeping that night and I spent it in the arms of a pretty young lass at the Albergo (hotel) d'Inglaterra, where I had taken lodgings—a delicious creature whom I had managed to seduce an hour after alighting, and in whose fresh embraces I tasted perfectly divine pleasures.

No city in all Italy is more regular nor duller than Turin; the courtier is tiresome there, the townsman doleful, the rabble equally hangdog and also superstitious and devout. Very slender resources for pleasure, moreover; setting forth from Anjou I had struck upon a properly libertine scheme, meditated upon it en route,

and 'twas at Turin I began its execution. My idea was to travel in the guise of a celebrated courtesan, to make broad display of myself everywhere, to enhance my fortune which the tribute exacted by my charms and in the interests of my libertinage to exploit whatever fell into my clutches of youth and vigor. On the day after my arrival I had word carried to Signora Diana, the most famous furnisher in Turin, that an engaging young Frenchwoman was in town and for hire, and that I would be obliged if she would come to discuss arrangements with me; the procuress did not fail to answer the call. I outlined my plans to her, and declared, that between fifteen and twenty-five they could have me for nothing where I had guarantee of sound health; that I took fifty *louis* between twenty-five and thirty-five; one hundred from thirty-five to sixty; and two hundred from sixty to the final point of human senescence; that as regarded fantasies, baroque dispositions, occult requirements, etc., I satisfied them all, that I even lent myself to whippings . . .

I assured Diana that I was very easy in this article, and that in consideration of a double fee no bid for the use of it would be refused. I did not have to wait long before being produced. It was the very next day a message from Diana advised me that I was expected for supper at the residence of the Duc de Chablais.

After one of those voluptuous toilettes whence Nature emerged embellished by the cunning hand of art, I betook myself to the house of this Chablais, then forty years of age and renowned throughout the entire country for his libidinous studies in venereal pleasures. The Duc had one of his sycophants by him, they promptly explained to me that in the games to follow I would play the dummy.

"Get yourself out of all this array," said the Duc, conducting me into a very elegant chamber.

I obeyed.

"One ought never wear a stitch when one has a body so fair," my two assailants observed. "Frenchwomen are all alike," the Duc went on to observe, "their figure and skin are delicious, we have nothing comparable here."

And the libertines inspected me, in their survey turn-

ing me this way and that but nevertheless concentrating their attention upon certain details and in a certain manner as soon gave me to suspect that it was not without reason Italians are charged with a predilection for the charms unappreciated by M. de Lorsange.

"Juliette," quoth the Duc, "I had better tell you that before you come to grips with us you shall make show of your talents upon some boys, they will be admitted into the room one at a time. Station yourself upon this couch if you will; the lads we have in store for you shall, as I say, enter in single file by this door to the right and march out that other door to the left."

Immediately the Duc was finished speaking the parade began: all the youths I handled were as handsome as a star. When the tournament was over all were in such a fever and rage that sweat lay on their brows and foam upon their lips.

"Your turn now," shouted the Duc," 'tis you, beauteous goddess come to us from France, who are about to receive the incense warmed within this crowd of charming boys."

The Duc and his satellites left; I remained in the room, recovering my breath. A woman came to fetch me, helped me dress and took me back to my lodgings after having counted me out a round thousand sequins.

"Be of good cheer," said I to myself, "my promenades in Italy shan't cost me much, I have but to find a similar windfall in each city I visit and not only will I defray my expenses, I will keep Mademoiselle de Lorsanges' dowry intact."

Ah, d'ye know, the life of a public whore is not all a bed of roses; however, having of my own free will resumed the profession, it was only just that together with its profits I also accept its liabilities. But we are yet a long way from coming to its perils.

The King of Sardinia loves libertinage. Chablais had reported to him upon our interview, His Highness was eager to see me. Curious to see whether sovereigns are like other men, I accepted the King's invitation. It did not take long and afterwards he offered me half his cup of breakfast chocolate, I thanked him right kindly. 'Twas of politics we chatted. The privileges conferred upon me

by my nationality and sex, those I had just now acquired through my performance, my native frankness, everything conspired to put me at my ease and according to my best recollection here as follows is the speech I made that morning to the little despot:

"Estimable gatekeeper of Italy, you who descend from a house whose rise constitutes a true miracle of policy, you whose ancestors, mere commoners and goatherds in olden times, became powerful lords.

"In our day there is nothing more superfluous than a king; renounce that empty title before it is gone too far out of fashion, step down from your throne now, voluntarily, before, as may well happen, you are dragged forcibly off it by the people whose eyes are beginning to tire of its height. Philosophical and free men are ill disposed to see above them a man who, carefully considered, and impartially, has no more than ordinary needs, strength and merit. The rumor begins to go about that a king is nothing but an ordinary human being; and that, softened by luxury, warped by despotism, there is not a single monarch on earth with the qualities requisite for his post. 'Tis not tucked away in a bower of bliss you learn how to lead your fellows. He who has never been anything but fortunate, understanding nothing of the needs of the fortuneless, he is not the man to guide the destinies of a nation made up of woe-ridden individuals; Sire, heed my advice: throw away your royal baubles, go back to your plow, there's nothing else left for you to do."

Taken somewhat aback by my outspokenness, His Majesty's only reply was some cajolery of that very false stamp which is the hallmark of everything that comes out of a true-born Italian's mouth; and we bade each other adieu.

That same evening I was introduced into a rather brilliant circle where, round a gaming table, I saw society grouped in two distinct classes: there were the rogues on the one side, and the dupes on the other: I was informed that the practice in Turin was to steal at play, and that a man could not pay addresses to a woman until he had let himself be robbed by her.

"Why, that's an amusing custom," I said to the gambler who was acquainting me with the situation.

"The explanation is perfectly simple," she continued; "gambling is a form of commerce, hence all ruses are lawful in it. Do you hail a shopkeeper before the magistrates because the curtains in his window filtered the light and led you to mistake shoddy wares for good? It has only to succeed and any means for acquiring wealth is proven sound, madame; this one is no worse than another."

I remembered Dorval's maxims on theft, and decided they were altogether applicable to this variety of it. Of my informant I asked how one might go about perfecting oneself in this manner of plundering the property of others, assuring her that I had a thorough understanding of most of the rest.

"There are masters," she replied, "I shall send you one tomorrow if you like."

I begged to do so; the teacher appeared and in the space of a week he had given me enough instruction in the management of cards to enable me to collect two thousand *louis* during the three months I stayed at Turin. When the time came to pay him for his lessons, he requested nothing but my favors; and as it was *a l'Italienne* he must have them, and as that style suited me infinitely, after a close examination of his state of health, a precautionary measure which cannot be foregone in that country, I let him take his pleasure in the fashion appropriate to a man whose trade is in treachery.

Sbrigani, that was my mentor's name, no more than thirty years of age, sound in wind and limb, of polished gesture and pretty speech, his was a libertine mind, a philosophical temper, and an astounding gift for appropriating anything belonging to others in every conceivable way. It at once occurred to me that such a man could be useful to me in the course of my travels; I proposed that we join forces; he accepted.

In Italy, regardless of the capacity in which a man accompanies an actress, singer or other strumpet, there is never anything repulsive in the fact for those who pay her suit: the brother, the husband, the father usually

withdraw when the customer appears on the threshold; does the latter's ardor seem to flag, the kinsman shows himself again, enters into conference with you both and if after this Signor's spirits look to be rising a little, retires into the clothes closet; it is understood that Signor supports the household, he therefore has its support; and the Italian, accommodating by nature, falls in wonderfully with this arrangement. As by now I knew enough of the tongue spoken in this splendid country to pass for a native, I straightway assigned Sbrigani the role of my husband, and we started forth on the road to Florence.

We proceeded at a leisurely pace; we had no cause to hurry, and I was well pleased to contemplate a land which, if one could but traverse it without seeing human beings, would answer one's idea of heaven. We lay the first night at Asti. This city, prodigiously fallen from its ancient grandeur, is hardly anything at all today. On the morrow we resumed our way and went no farther than Alessandria; Sbrigani having assured that this town was reputed for the large numbers of nobility among it population, we decided to spend several days there and see what dupes might be found.

Directly we would arrive somewhere, my husband issued a kind of clandestine but nonetheless very effective proclamation by which those who had the wherewithal to purchase my charms were provided a general description of them and some indication of their price.

The first to present himself was an old Piedmontese duke, ten years retired from the court; he wanted no more, said he, than to view my body. For this pleasure Sbrigani charged him fifty sequins; but, heated by the prospect, the duke shortly demanded more. Ever the submissive wife, I announced that I can consent to nothing without my husband's approval; no longer in any state to undertake a serious attack, the duke manifests a desire to whip. Sbrigani sets the figure at a sequin a blow and fifteen minutes later I have three hundred coins in my purse. From his lordship's spendthrift manner my husband deduces that here is a man to be dunned, enquires into all his concerns, and beseeches him to ac cord his wife the honor of supping with her. Greatly puffed up by this request, the old courtier feigns indeci-

sion for a moment, allows himself to be prevailed upon.

"Magnanimous and revered favorite of Italy's greatest prince," says Sbrigani, introducing him to Augustine, whom we have told what is afoot, "the time has come for blood to speak, now must Nature stir in your soul; recollect the affair you once had, in Venice, with the lovely Signor Delfina, married to an aristocrat of second rank. Behold it, Excellency, you see standing before you the fruit of that liaison. Agostina is your daughter; embrace her, my lord, she is worthy of you. 'Tis I who formed her from childhood and tell me now, have not my efforts been successful? I feel that I may rightfully boast of having turned her into one of the prettiest and cleverest creatures in Europe. Excellency! Great has been my desire to meet you, far and wide have I sought you out: overhearing that you dwelt at Alessandria, I hied myself hither, for I wanted to see it with my own eyes. Aye, 'tis so, the resemblance cannot be doubted; so here you are, good my lord, and I trust you will reward me for my pains and have some kindness to show a humble Italian who for all his wealth has naught else but the beauty of his wife."

Augustine's slender waist and willowy figure, her big brown eyes, and the exceeding fairness of her skin made a powerful impression upon the duke; and the allurements of incest contributing their heavy share to his joyous anticipations, after a few explanations, a few answers perfectly provided by Sbrigani, the poor duke assured us of his emotion, declared he recognized Augustine, and meant to take her home that very instant and assign her the rank she deserved to have in his family.

"Softly, softly," said my illustrious spouse, "your Excellency has his dinner to digest. And I would remind him that the girl is mine until I have been reimbursed for the immense costs I have incurred on her account, ten thousand sequins would hardly cover them. Nevertheless, in view of the honor you have so graciously done my wife, I cannot haggle with your lordship and will be content with that paltry sum; sire, pray tell it out forthwith, else I'll not be able to let Agostina leave my house."

The bawdy duke was also rich and to his dazed con-

sideration, for so pretty a piece of merchandise as this no price could be too high; the transaction was concluded between cheese and dessert and after coffee my chambermaid went off with her alleged father. Thoroughly instructed in what she was to do, the dear girl, speaking Italian as fluently as I and equally unbackward where it was a question of raiding other people's property, was not long showing her mettle. We had gone to wait for her at Parma; a fortnight later she rejoined us there and recounted how the duke, head over heels in love with her, had begun his wooing of her the very first night. The more she harped on the relationship which forbade such an intrigue, the better the old rake had waxed, pointing out to her that such fussiness and splitting of hairs simply wasn't the practice in Italy. More at ease in his own house, better able to employ the assistance of third persons or the restoratives he apparently had not dared resort to when visiting me, the libertine acquitted himself more honorably. The sweet girl's extreme docility had so inflamed the poor duke that he had overwhelmed her with presents and given her his entire confidence. Entrusted also with all the keys to all the locks, she had rifled the treasury and decamped; and she closed her narration by producing something over five hundred thousand francs. As you may readily imagine, after such a capture we did not tarry overlong in the neighborhood, although it ought to be said that we were hardly in any great danger. For in Italy one has but to cross into the nearest province when one runs afoul of the law: the authorities of one State cannot prosecute you in another; and better yet, as administrations change every day, often twice a day, the crime you commit before dinner is too old to punish by nightfall;—all this is of clear convenience to travellers whom, as was the case with us, are eager to wreak havoc along the way.

However, discretion being the better part of valor, we made a judicious departure from the States of Parma and did not stop till we were come to Bologna. The beauty of the women in that city forbade me from proceeding farther before having my fill of them. Delicious creatures! I shall ever sing your memory, and never forget

your charms nor your matchless skill in awakening and maintaining voluptuous titillations; nor shall I forget your cunning refinements; and my most delicious moments shall be those during which I recall to mind the pleasures we tasted together. They were all so pretty, so fresh and gay that choosing among them was impossible; if at any point I endeavored to concentrate upon one, that multitude of beauties would distract my attention and the ensemble would reassert its claim to my homage.

Mesdames soon devised another fashion for giving me pleasure; here, all activities centered upon me: I was lain upon a group of six, with whose voluptuous undulations I sweetly rose and fell, and all the rest came forward by the half-dozen to consult my sensations.

While I was off rioting Sbrigani devoted himself to replenishing our funds, seriously depleted by my wild spending; by the time I returned he had accomplished the last of a series of six robberies and entirely repaired the damage my extravagance had caused. This was in the extent of between two and three thousand sequins; we were able to leave Bologna about as rich as we had come.

I was exhausted; but since the excesses of libertinage, as they weary the body, only heat the imagination further, my thoughts were taken up with planning a thousand new orgies; I regretted not having done more and in search of an explanation for my failure could only suppose that it was owing to some mental sluggishness on my part: and it was then I discovered that the remorse one may suffer for not having gone to the limit in crime is superior to anything that afflicts feeble spirits for having strayed away from virtue.

Such were my physical and moral states as we were crossing the Apennines. This vast mountain chain dividing the peninsula along its length holds much of interest for the enquiring traveller; as the road rises, the most extraordinary prospects greet the eye: on the one side stretches the great Lombardian Plain, and on the other lies the Adriatic Sea; a spyglass enables one to see to a distance of fifty leagues.

We dined at the wayside inn at Pietra Mala, with the intention of visiting the volcano. Profoundly devoted to all the irregularities of Nature, adoring everything that

characterizes her disorders, her caprices and the gigantine horrors whereof she gives us renewed examples every day, I had of course to observe this phenomenon; and so, after a meal that was poor despite our policy of always sending a cook ahead of us, we set out on foot across the little stretch of blasted terrain at whose farther end the crater is situated. The zone surrounding it is a waste, uncultivated and littered with pebbles and stones; the temperature of the air mounts as one moves toward it, and one breathes the stench of copper and carbon the volcano exhales; by and by we caught sight of the flame whose heat, curiously enough, was intensified by a fine rain which happened then to start to fall: the fire-pit seemed about thirty or forty feet in circumference: strike a spade into the earth anywhere near it, and fire springs up from the ground at that spot . . .

The earth inside that furnace is baked, charred, black; that in its vicinity is like clay, and impregnated with the volcano's odor. The flame soaring from the pit comes out in an intense gush, it burns and instantly consumes anything tossed into it; its color is a violet blue, like the color of burning brandy. To the right of Pietra Mala is another volcano which only bursts into flame when fire is brought near its edge; nothing so amusing as the experiment we made: by means of a candle we set the whole plain afire. With a mind like mine such things had best never be seen, yes, my friends, I must agree to that; but the candle I touched to the ground set it alight less quickly than the poisonous vapors arising from the place were intoxicating my brain.

"Oh my dear," said I to Sbrigani, "Nero's wish is becoming mine. Did I not foresee that from breathing that monster's native air I would soon adopt his penchants?"

When rain fills the crater of that second volcano with water, this water boils away in steam, and this steam is cool—O Nature! impenetrable and strange are thy ways and beyond the imitation of mortals . . .

It is to be feared that the many volcanoes ringing Florence may someday cause it harm: these fears are amply justified by the signs of past upheavals one notices everywhere in the area. They suggested some comparative ideas to me: is it not very probable, said I to

myself, that the fiery destructions of Sodom, Gomorrha, etc., made up into miracles for the purpose of instilling in us a terror of the vice which held universal sway among the inhabitants of those cities; is it not altogether likely that the famous conflagrations were caused, not by supernatural agencies, but by natural forces? The region surrounding Lake Asphalite, where Sodom and Gomorrha lay, was studded with imperfectly extinct volcanoes; the country there was similar to what it is here. From the geographical parallel I moved on to the parallel of climate; and when I saw as at Florence, Gomorrha as at Naples, I came swiftly to conclude that the irregularity of human behavior is closely related to Nature's own caprices, and that wherever Nature is depraved she also corrupts her children; wherewith I imagined myself transported to those happy Arabian towns, here I am in Sodom, I said, let us do here as the Sodomites do.

"This is indeed a charming pastime I find you at," we suddenly heard declared in a cavernous voice which seemed to issue from behind a bush. "No, no, carry on, carry on, I do not wish to spoil your pleasures, only to take a hand in them," went on this species of centaur who, as he emerged from hiding and drew near, proved to be of proportions and aspect which exceeded anything we had ever seen in all our lives. Seven feet and three inches tall, with, behind huge mustaches, a face both swarthy and awful, we pondered for a moment whether it were not the Prince of Darkness who was hailing us. Surprised at our alarmed stares, "What!" cried he, "have you not heard of the Hermit of the Apennines?"

"Forsooth," Sbrigani replied, "we have never heard tell of the likes of you."

"Why then come along with me, all four of you, and you shall behold more wonderful yet: the business I discovered you engaged in leads me to suspect that you deserve to see what I have to show you, and to partake in it too."

"Giant," said Sbrigani, "we are fond of extraordinary things and to witness them there is doubtless nothing we were unwilling to do; but your tremendous strength, sirrah, might it not be exerted to the detriment of our liberty?"

"No, because I judge you worthy of my society," said this singular personage; "but for that, your fears would be fully authorized. Lay them aside however, and follow me."

Mightily curious to learn what this adventure held in store for us, we sent Zephyr to tell our entourage to wait for us at the inn until we reappeared there; Zephyr returned from his errand, we set forth, the giant in the lead.

"Have patience," our guide told us, "the road is long, but seven hours of daylight remain and we shall arrive before the veils of night overspread the heavens."

We walked in total silence, for the giant would have it so; during that march I was able to give all my attention to the landscape.

Leaving the volcanic plain of Pietra Mala we climbed, for an entire hour, the slope of a high mountain lying to the right; from the pass we finally reached we gazed into an abyss a full two thousand fathoms deep, and it was down into it our winding path led, through a forest that quickly grew so dense, so dark we were scarce able to see the way. After three hours of nearly perpendicular descent we came to the edge of a lake; upon an isle in its center was to be seen the donjon of the castle where our guide had his abode, of which only the roof could be made out owing to lofty battlements girting it. A black bark, like a Venetian gondola, was moored to the shore; from there we could take in the tremendous bowl at whose bottom we were: it was rimmed all around by towering mountains whose flanks were covered by forests of pine, larch and green oak, and ended in barren peaks and snow: words cannot convey to what extent that scene was wild and lonely and forbidding, nay, unearthly. We stepped into the boat, the giant ferried us to the island. His castle lay two furlongs back from the water; we arrived before an iron gate set in the thick outer enceinture, spanning a moat twenty feet wide was a drawbridge which rose directly we had crossed over it; here was a second wall, again we went through an iron gate, and found ourselves in a belt of trees so close-spaced that we had verily to force a passage between them, and beyond this enormous hedge was the castle's third enclosure, a

wall ten feet thick and without any gate at all. The giant bends and lifts a great stone slab no one else would have been able to budge; thus does he uncover a stairway, we precede him down the steps, he replaces the stone; at the farther end of that underground passage we ascend another stairway, guarded by another such stone as I have just spoken of, and emerge from dank darkness into a low-ceilinged hall. It was decorated, littered with skeletons; there were benches fashioned of human bones and wherever one trod 'twas upon skulls; we fancied we heard moans coming from remote cellars; and we were shortly informed that the dungeons containing this monster's victims were situated in the vaults underneath this hall.

"I have you in my power," he said once we had sat down, "I can do with you what I please. Do not, however, be alarmed; the acts I saw you in the midst of performing convinced me that here were kindred spiirts such as would merit my hospitality. Supper is being prepared, between now and the time it is ready let me tell you a little about myself.

"I am a Muscovite, born in a small town on the Volga bank. Minski is my name; upon my father's death I inherited his colossal riches, and Nature had proportioned my physical faculties and my tastes to the favors wherewith fortune now gratified me. Sensing myself made for better things than to vegetate in the backcountry of an obscure province like this that was my birthplace, I travelled; the whole wide world seemed too narrow for my desires, they were limitless and the universe cramped them: born libertine and impious, debauched and perverse, bloodthirsty and ferocious, I visited a thousand farflung lands to learn their vices, and no sooner adopted one than I refined it. I began with China, the Mongolias and Tartary; I journeyed throughout all Asia; swerving north again I passed by way of Kamchatka and entered America by the Bering Channel. In that extensive part of the world I sojourned practically everywhere, by turns in its politer societies, by turns amongst its savages, copying none but the crimes of the former, the vices and atrocities of the latter. Sailing east, to your Europe I brought back penchants so dangerous that they

condemned me to the stake in Spain, to be broken on the wheel in France, hanged in England, drawn and quartered in Italy; wealth is a guarantee against anything. I crossed over to Africa; 'twas there I became most fully aware, that what you so foolishly call depravity is neither more nor less than the natural state of man and its particular details usually the result of the environment into which Nature has cast him. Those noble children of the sun laughed at me when I rebuked them for their barbarous treatment of women. 'And what do you suppose a woman is,' they would reply, 'if not a domestic animal Nature gives us for the double purpose of satisfying our needs and our desires? What better claim to our consideration has she, than the cattle and swine in our barnyards? The only difference we see here,' those sensible people would tell me, 'is that our livestock may merit some indulgence thanks to their mildness and docility, whereas women merit harshness only, in view of their congenital and everlasting dishonesty, mischievousness, treachery and perfidy.'

"In a word, it was there I observed man in his constitutionally vicious, instinctively cruel, and studiously ferocious form, and as such he pleased me, as such he seemed to me in closer harmony with Nature, and I preferred these characteristics to the simple crudeness of the American, to the knavery of the European, to the cynical depravation of the Oriental. Having killed men on the hunt with the first, having drunk wine and lied with the second, having had much sex with the third, I ate human flesh with my brave African comrade; I have preserved a taste for it; all this wreckage you see around you are relics of the creatures I devour; I eat no other sort of meat; I trust you shall enjoy tonight's feast.

"I have two harems: the first contains two hundred girls of all ages, none over thirty; fifty servants of either sex look after this considerable store of pleasure-objects; and for purposes of recruitment I have one hundred agents posted in all the large cities of the world. And yet, with all the movement this entails, the only access to my island home is by way of the trail you came along today, no one would ever believe it is constantly being utilized by perfect caravans, and the security in which all

this is accomplished will never be violated. Not, mark you, that I have the slightest reason for worrying; we are here inside the territories of the Duke of Tuscany; the whole extent of my irregular doings is known in those circles, and the tips I scatter about protect it from undue publicity as well as from interference. To round out this portrayal of myself, I had best provide some details touching my more intimate person: I am forty-five, and at this age my faculties are such that I never retire for the night without having made love ten times. I have few visitors, indeed none unless in the course of my outings I encounter persons who, like you, strike me as philosophers enough to take part in my amusements awhile; such people only do I invite to my home, and I meet with few; thanks to my natural vigor, it is very far I am apt to rove on those excursions, not a day goes by but I make a twelve-league, sometimes a fifteen-league sally forth from here—"

"And hence some captures," I interrupted.

"Captures, rapes, burnings, murders, whatever the criminal chances happen to be I exploit them to the full, because Nature endowed me with a propensity for every crime and the means for committing them all, and because there is none I do not cherish and that does not afford me sweetest joy and make me glad in my heart."

"And justice?"

"Inexistent in this country; that is why I chose it for my domicile in the first place: with money, you do anything you like here, and I spend a lot."

Two of Minski's masculine slaves, evil-looking blackamoors, announced that supper was served; they knelt before their master, and we removed into the next room.

"No special trouble has been gone to on your account," said the giant, "if all the kings on earth were to come to see me I'd not depart one inch from my custom."

But some description should be given of that dining room and of the accessories in it.

"The appointments you see here," said our host, "are alive; they move when the signal is given."

Minski snaps his fingers and the table in the corner of the room scuttles into the middle of it; five chairs

dispose themselves around the table, two chandeliers descend from the ceiling and hover above the table.

"There is nothing mysterious about it," says the giant, having us examine the composition of these furnitures from closer on. "You notice that this table, these chandeliers, those chairs are each made up of a group of girls cunningly arranged; my meal will be served upon the backs of these creatures; wherefor it is I pray you lift your skirts, mesdames, and you, messieurs, remove your breeches so that, in accordance with the words of Scripture, flesh may rest upon flesh."

"Minski," I observed to our Russian, "the role assigned to these girls is arduous, above all if you are long at table."

As we tucked up our skirts and the men climbed out of their breeches, Minski demanded to have a look at us; Sbrigani's enjoyed his particular favor; that ceremony ended, we took our places, bareskinned, on Minski's sultanas.

Twelve naked girls of between twenty and twenty-five brought the dishes; and as they were massive silver and very hot, by scorching the breasts and buttocks of the elements composing the table, there was a pleasant convulsive stir produced, it resembled the rippling of waves at sea; above twenty entrees or roast platters decked the table and upon side-tables, built of four grouped girls each and which also ambled up at the snap of a finger, were ranged wines of every kind.

"My friends," said our host, "as I have already informed you, only human flesh is served here; those plates are pure of any other ingredient."

"We'll try some," said Sbrigani; "it is absurd to turn up one's nose at anything, it is no more extraordinary after all, to eat human than to eat chicken."

So saying my husband carved himself a generous two pounds, fell merrily to; I imitated him; Minski encouraged us; and as his appetite was in the same class with his passions, he had soon licked a dozen platters clean.

He drank the way he ate; he had tossed off his thirtieth bottle of burgundy by the time the second course came on; this he washed down with champagne; and

Aleatico, Falernian and other rare Italian vintages were swallowed at dessert.

Yet another good thirty bottles of wine were in our cannibal's guts when, his senses sufficiently enlivened by all these physical and moral excesses, the rogue declared that he was now in an erotic mood.

"But come with me into the room next this," the Russian continued, "ices, coffee and liqueurs are awaiting us. As for you charming ladies, your asses distinctly delighted me and, in token of my gratitude, for the next two days I accord you the run of my seraglios; enjoy yourselves there, my beauties, they are rare facilities I place at your disposition."

Realizing after a while that in our fatigued condition we were no longer able to keep pace with him, Minski had his slaves conduct us to a superb gallery where in four mirror-paneled alcoves stood the beds we required for rest. A corresponding number of girls were under instruction to chase away flies and burn incense during our sleep.

It was late when we awoke. Our attendants led us to the bathrooms where under their expert care we were wonderfully refreshed.

Upon the stroke of eleven a messenger arrived to announce that Minski had granted us the honor of visiting him in his bed. We entered his chamber; it was spacious, upon the walls were magnificent frescoes representing ten libertine groups which for composition were probably the highest thing ever attained in obscenity. At the far end of that room was a wide semi-circular apse paneled by mirrors and containing sixteen black marble columns to each of which a girl was bound. By means of a pair of cords placed like bell-pulls at the head of our hero's bed, he could subject each of those sixteen girls in the distance to a different form of abuse, the torture lasting until he released the cord. Independently of the girls aforementioned there were six others plus a dozen boys, some agents and some patients, who remained on hand in nearby antechambers for such night-service as their libertine overlord might require.

"Minski," quoth I to our host, "your supply of women is large enough to permit you to indulge your kindness;

it is in my friends' behalf as well as my own I ask you to treat us to this charming scene."

Augustine shrilled, imploring us not to surrender her to the monster, "how do you expect me to endure such an experience?"

"With patience and understanding," says Minski.

And, having his attendants undress her, he engaged her to assume the appropriate posture.

"Have no fear," he continued, "no woman has ever resisted me."

From the Russian's manner and mien deciding that objections would only serve to irritate him further, we dared not even manifest our regrets.

"It's only a little whim," Minski whispered to me, "it will be satisfied in a trice. This girl provokes me, blame it all upon her body from the waist down."

Augustine swooned, Minski, in seventh heaven, only waxes the hotter; four girls and as many boys crowd round him, so well trained are they in their duties that not an instant elapses but all is ready; Augustine lies somewhere beneath the giant's bulk, she has quite vanished, her assassin swears and nears the mark.

At this point Sbrigani caught my eye. His opinion, communicated to me in a murmur, was that we had perhaps beware of this monster and to ask to leave the premises as soon as possible. Forsooth, I said to myself, a request to depart could hardly entail greater risks than remaining here; however, upon entering the room Minski ushered us into, I was content to put on an aloof air which, conveying my disapprobation of his late proceedings, allowed him to infer how suspicious they had made me touching his designs in my own regard.

"Come, come," said the ogre, having me sit down on a couch beside him, "I am surprised at you, Juliette. For I thought you much too much of a philosopher to miss that girl, or to suppose for one instant that the laws of hospitality were operative in the house of a man with a soul like mine."

"What you have done is irreparable."

"Piffle."

"I loved Augustine."

"You loved her! If you are silly enough to love an ob-

ject which serves your lust, why, Juliette, there is nothing more I can say: it would be a waste of time hunting for arguments to convince you; none exist against stupidity."

"Very well then," I said grumpily, "it isn't Augustine I am thinking about, but myself. I am anxious, I admit it. You will stop at nothing. What assurance have I that you will not subject me to the same treatment that undid my friend?"

"None, absolutely none," said Minski, "and if the idea of assassinating you were to excite me, you'd no longer be among the living a quarter of an hour later. But I thought you were as much a rascal as I; in view of our resemblance, I prefer you as my accomplice than as my victim. That is also my attitude toward the two men in your company; they took look to me fitter to participate actively in my pleasures than to be the occasion of them: your security reposes upon this assumption. And what of Augustine? Ah! a bird of a different feather; I am a good physiognomist: more servile than criminal, she complied with your desires, did as she was told but was far from doing what she wanted. I had to violate those laws, some gesture was required of me; I am satisfied now, put your cares away."

"Minski, your frankness merits that I reply in the same strain. Let me repeat it: if I am disturbed by Augustine's fate it is mainly because it provides me cause for concern over mine. You were not mistaken in your judgment of me, I have sacrificed a fair number of them in my life, and I swear to you I have never bewailed the passing of a single one."

At this Minski nodded and made as if to rise. "No," I said praying him to stay a little, "you just now began a criticism of the virtue of hospitality, I have a liking for principles; intimate to me yours on this head. Although it has been a long while since any virtue has enjoyed my favor, I never took firm measures against my notions of hospitality—was it oversight? was it chance? or could it be that I harbored some obscure belief in their sanctity? Combat, discredit, destroy, extirpate—speak, Minski, you have my ear."

"The greatest of all extravagances," the giant began,

plainly not displeased to have this opportunity to display his wit, "is without doubt that which leads us to ascribe a privileged nature to the individual who, by accident, through curiosity, or because of need, ventures under our roof; nothing but some personal motive could ever have induced us into this error. No people has ever exercised hospitality gratuitously: read all their histories and you will discover the particular reasons each had for receiving strangers generously; and indeed, what would be more ridiculous than to throw one's house open to an individual from whom one expected nothing in return? In the name of what is a man under obligation to play benefactor to another man? Does the material or moral similarity obtaining between two bodies entail the necessity that one of these bodies do good to the other? Let there be no mistake about it, the granting of hospitality is as dangerous as the granting of charity; all civilities that emanate from benevolence—a sentiment originating in weakness and arrogance—all of them are pernicious, from every imaginable point of view; and the prudent man, the reasonable man, stealing his heart against all these pusillanimous impulses, must take every good care to avoid the grim pitfalls into which they entice us.

"Unsociableness toughens a man's heart and thereby renders him fitter for great deeds; so it is that we see theft and murder erected into virtues; and only in those nations where this occurs do we ever see great feats and great men.

"The entire world, in short, furnishes us examples of national loathing for the virtues of hospitality; and from this overwhelming accumulation of evidence and from our own reflexions we are obliged to conclude that there is probably nothing more injurious nor more contrary to one's well-being and to that of others than a rule whose purpose is to bind the rich man to give asylum to the poor whereof the latter will never profit save to his ultimate and inevitable detriment and to the donor's also. A man can enter a foreign land for only one of two reasons: because of his curiosity, or because he is in search of dupes; in the first case, he must be made to pay

for his entertainment; in the second, he must be punished."

"O Minski!" I replied, "you persuade me; the maxims I have long embraced upon charity, upon benevolence are too similar to yours upon hospitality for me not to concur in the opinions you have just expounded. But there is yet another thing concerning which I would be grateful for your advice: Augustine, whose attachment to me was of several years' standing, is survived by aged parents, they are needy and quite unable to shift for themselves; as we were starting upon our journey she mentioned them to me and asked me not to forget them if perchance some mishap were to befall her during our absence from home; do you think I should settle a pension upon them? . . ."

"Certainly not," Minski was quick to answer, "by what right would you presume to do any such thing? And for their part, what claim can the parents of your late friend make to your bounty? You paid that girl wages, did you not, you maintained her the whole while she was in your hire; what connection does that establish between you and her parents? Oh Juliette, how greatly do study and deep thought improve our understanding of the human heart; and how great becomes our determination to defy human principles once we come to know the being who devised them, for they are all of man's making, and in the name of what do you call upon me to respect that which is no more than the handiwork of somebody no better than I?

"This act of charity you are meditating with regard to Augustine's necessitous parents would have all the disadvantageous aspects presented by pity and comparison, feelings to which, as it appears to me, you are not much addicted. Charity makes for nothing but dupes, Juliette, benevolence nothing but foes; believe what I say, my doctrine is sound, only adhere to it and you shall never have cause to complain of me."

"Such principles suit my character and have been responsible for my felicity," said I to the giant; "virtue has always appalled me, never has it brought me a groat's worth of happiness." And to lend weight to these state-

ments I related how a moment of virtuousness had once reduced me to rag and ruin and all but cost me my life.

"Oh Minski," I cried, "I deem you a happy man; I too have tasted those delights, although not to such an extent. . . . My friend, your reminiscences, your remarks stir me beyond words; I would ask you a favor, 'tis to let me rove through your castle's hundred halls, to dally with your innumerable minions, open up to me this vast field of crime."

"I shall, but upon one condition: I demand the total cession of that young man," said Minski, and it was to Zephyr he referred.

My hesitation lasted an instant; I dropped my glance and saw that it was the icy point of a stiletto tingling upon my breast.

"Choose," that fierce man bade me, "between death or the pleasures my house can afford you."

Yes, despite my fondness for Zephyr, I surrendered him —could I do otherwise?

We removed to another apartment. A magnificent repast of exotic fruits, of pastries, of milk and of warm beverages was presented by a swarm of half-naked boys who, as they brought round the plates, cut a thousand merry capers, performed a thousand little naughtinesses one more libertine than the other. My two men and I breakfasted heartily. As for Minski, he was served solider stuff; eight or ten virgin-blood sausages, and two testicle pasties took the edge off his hunger, eighteen magnums of Greek wine accompanied those victuals into his enormous belly. He picked baseless quarrels with a dozen of his pages, lashed six of them to ribbons, pounded the other six senseless with his fists.

The first room we came to was large, billeted in it were ten score women from twenty to thirty-five. We walked up and down the ranks to have a nearer view of those who constituted them. Those women were dressed in such a manner as none of their charms were concealed: a simple drape of tulle left their breasts and buttocks exposed.

Leading off this room was another, not quite so spacious and containing five and twenty beds; this was the

infirmary for women injured by the ogre's intemperances, or who fell ill.

"Should the indispositions become serious," Minski said to me as he opened one of the windows, "I transfer them to the outdoor ward."

Fancy our surprise when, peering into the courtyard below, we discovered it crowded with bears, lions, leopards and tigers.

"Indeed," said I, "such leeches must very shortly relieve anybody of what ails him."

"Oh yes. Down there you're cured in the twinkle of an eye. It is rapid, it is tidy, no pollution of the air. And one saves money; for you will agree, Juliette, defective females are not worth what it costs to keep them alive."

In all the other seraglios it was the same hanging, the same inspection of the ranks.

We rambled through the other apartments where were enacted all manner of horrifying scenes, Zephyr expired in the course of one of the most ferocious of them.

"Well, good friend," quoth I when I had sated my passions, "you can hardly deny that the conduct you permit yourself here, and which in my weakness I have copied, is abominably unjust."

"Come sit down," that libertine invited me, "and listen to what I have to say.

"Before deciding, simply because of the veneer of injustice you see there, that the action I commit is blameworthy, we had better, I think, come to some sort of understanding upon what we mean by just and unjust. If now you meditate a little upon the ideas lying behind these terms, you will recognize that they are most profoundly relative, and profoundly lacking in anything intrinsically real. Similar to concepts of virtue and of vice, they are purely local and geographical; that which is vicious in Paris turns up, as we know, a virtue in Peking, and it is quite the same thing here: that which is just in Ispahan they call unjust in Copenhagen. Amidst these manifold variations do we discover anything constant? Only this: each country's peculiar legal code, each individual's peculiar interests provide the sole bases of justice. But these national, these regional laws depend

upon the preferences of the government locally in power, and these interests depend upon the physiology of the individual who has them; in such sort that self-interest, you see it very clearly, is the single rule for defining just and unjust; and that in the light of a certain law it will be very just in a certain country to behead a man for a deed which would win him laurels elsewhere, quite as a certain individual interest will reckon just a deed which, nonetheless, the person whom it harms will esteem very iniquitous."

"Minski," I remarked, "I have often heard it said, however, that there is a kind of natural justice man has always and everywhere adhered to, or which he has never violated save he rued it afterward."

"Sheer nonsense," said the Muscovite, "that fabled natural justice is simply the fruit of man's weakness, his ignorance or his folly whenever it is not to his advantage to propagate the lie. Take Nature for your guide when you shape your laws, only in this way will you avoid error. Well, is there any limit to the injustices we see her commit all the time? Is there anything so unjust as the hailstorm that capricious power flings to the ruin of the poor peasant whilst, explain it as you will, not a grape in his rich neighbor's vineyards is spoilt? and the wars of her fomenting in whose course the whole of a land is laid waste for the benefit alone of some tyrant, and the fortunes she permits the villain to amass while the honest man founders all his life in hardship and privation? Say, those diseases wherewith she slaughters off the populations of entire provinces, those repeated, inumerable triumphs she accords brazen vice while not a day passes but she grinds deserving virtue beneath her heel; this protection she forever grants to the powerful man, seconding him to the detriment of the helpless—I ask you, is all that just? and may we suppose we are guilty when we imitate her."

We continued our tour of the apartments, and put into practice the theories which the giant had just developed for me. Our unspeakable doings finally reduced me to such a point of exhaustion that I was obliged to beg quarter, and to Minski, announced that the one desire I had left was to repose myself for the rest of the day.

"Just as you like," said he, "I can perfectly well postpone until tomorrow showing you the two rooms you have yet to see, and which contain features and equipment that will probably astonish you."

Sbrigani and I retired to our bed-chamber; when alone with my one remaining travelling companion, "Good friend," said I, "we found entry into the palace of vice and horror, if this piece of excellent fortune is not to be spoiled we must now find a way out of it. However, our host is too great a menace to humanity, my principles approve too warmly of such a character and of such depravation for me to wrest him away from the world. It would be to borrow the role of the law, it would be to serve society, to banish this scoundrel out of it, and I am not so fond of virtue as to render it such an enormous service. So I propose to let this man live rather than throw crime into mourning: eh, a Friend of Crime deprive Crime of a sectator? Perish the thought! We must rob him, that is all; but it is important, he is richer than we and equality has always been the cornerstone of my doctrine. Rob him, then fly; else he will not fail to kill us, for pleasure's sake or perhaps to rob us himself. With some stramonium we shall drug him, while he sleeps steal his money, pick the two prettiest wenches out of his harems, and escape."

Sbrigani was not immediately won over to my scheme: stramonium, he pointed out, might not have effect upon a body of such prodigious size, a concentrated dose of strong poison looked far the more advisable thing to him; specious though my considerations were, they must cede before those of our safety and, according to my husband, it would be uncertain so long as the ogre remained alive. But unshakable in my resolve to take all possible care never to be undoing of anyone as wicked as I, I held firm. At last we decided that after administering the drug to the ogre while breakfasting with him, we would proclaim the success of a plot against his life, thus forestalling any objections his hirelings might raise to our appropriation of his wealth, and that once we had emptied his coffers we would quit the palace forthwith.

It all came out remarkably well. Swallowing the chocolate into which we had slipped the stramonium, Minski

sank a few minutes later into a torpor so deep that we had no trouble persuading the household that its overlord was dead. His steward was the first of those who sought to induce us to reign in his stead; we feigned consent, and having had the treasure-chests opened, we loaded the most valuable of their contents upon the men. Proceeding next to the harem of women, we chose two French girls, Elise and Raimonde, and then set forth after assuring the major-domo that we would shortly return to lead him and the others away; that we were indeed prepared to succeed to the place left vacant by his deceased master but felt that such splendid possessions would be put to better showing in some one of the cities of the plain, where we ought all to remove rather than continue to dwell like bears in this dreadful den. Enchanted, the major-domo facilitated everything, concurred in everything, and for his cooperation was doubtless richly rewarded by the giant when upon awakening he learnt of his losses and of our flight.

Our loot loaded into our carriage, our women installed inside and we too having taken our places, we dismissed the ten porters, after paying them for their trouble and advising them to head in any direction except back to the inferno where only calamity would be awaiting them. They did not dispute the wisdom of our counsel, we bade them farewell and departed. That same evening we reached the outskirts of Florence. Directly we procured lodgings we turned to taking stock of our treasures and to appraising our two women: they were lovely creatures.

Elise combined all Venus' graces with the seductive charms of the goddess of flowers. Raimonde, a year older, had one of those inspiring faces you cannot look upon without emotion; both of them recently acquired by Minski, neither had yet been touched, and it need hardly be stressed that this circumstance was among the principal ones which had led me to select them. They helped us establish the tale of our booty, it included six million in gold and silver coins, another four in gems, plate, ingots and Italian bank-notes. Ah, how my eyes feasted upon this hoard, and how sweet it is to count lucre when it is to a crime we owe its having! These tasks dispatched,

we retired, and in the arms of my two conquests I spent the most delicious night I had enjoyed in a long time.

Allow me now to speak for a moment, my friends, of the superb city we came to the following morning.

Constructed by Sulla's troops, embellished by the Triumvirs, destroyed by Attila, then rebuilt by Charlemagne; enlarged at the expense of the ancient city of Fiesole, its neighbor, of which today only ruins are left; for many decades torn by internecine strife; subjugated by the Medicis who having ruled it for two hundred years finally let it pass to the House of Lorraine, Florence is now governed, as is the whole of Tuscany whereof it is the chief town, by Leopold, archduke and brother of the Queen of France,* a despotic, haughty and ungracious prince, like the rest of his family very debauched and libertine, as my subsequent narrations shall soon convince you.

Soon after arriving in this city I was able to conclude that the Florentines still think back nostalgically upon their native-born princes and resent being under the control of foreigners. Nobody is taken in by Leopold's seeming simplicity; the popular costume he affects does not conceal his Germanic arrogance, and those who know anything of the spirit and temper of the Austrian dynasty understand why its members have far less difficulty pretending to virtues than acquiring them.

Florence, lying at the foot of the Apennine range, is split by the River Arno; this central part of Tuscany's capital is somewhat similar to the heart of Paris, traversed by the Seine; but there the comparison between the two cities must end, for Florence has many fewer inhabitants and in extent is a great deal smaller than the other. The reddish brown stone its larger buildings are constructed of gives it a disagreeable, forlorn air. The superb ducal palace gallery I went to visit the day after we arrived. Impossible to render my enthusiasm amidst all those masterpieces. I adore the arts, they excite me; everything

* The particulars, the reader should be reminded, were exact at the time Madame de Lorsange was touring Italy. Everybody knows the changes that have transpired since, both in Florence and in other parts of this fine country, (*Note* to the seventh edition.)

that imitates glorious Nature must be cherished too. . . . No encouragement is too great for those who love and copy her. There is but one way to make her bare her secrets, 'tis through incessant, unwearying study of her; only by probing into her furthermost recesses may one finally destroy the last of one's misconceptions. I adore a talented woman; a pretty face will seduce me, but the spell talents weave, captivates more durably; and I think that the one is more flattering than the other to one's amour-propre.

My guide, as you may readily suppose, did not fail to show me the room in that celebrated museum where Cosimo Medici was surprised at one of his little infamies. The famous Vasari was busy painting the ceilings of the apartment when Cosimo appeared there with his daughter in tow, of whom he was inordinately fond: never pausing to think that the painter might be at work on the scaffolding overhead, that incestuous prince proceeded to caress the object of his ardors. Cosimo espies the couch nearby, the couple repair to it, the act is consummated within the view of the artist who, just as soon as ever he could, retired out of Florence, believing that violence would surely be used to prevent intelligence of such a liaison from getting abroad, and that witnessing what he had just witnessed could well mean an early doom. Vasari's were not idle fears at a period and in a town where the teachings of Machiavelli found no end of disciples.

From there we went to look at Titian's renowned *Venus,* and I confess that before this sublime work my emotions were stirred, the beauties of Nature are uplifting to the soul.

Here the figure is a delicious blonde, with lovely eyes, but features a shade too sharply drawn for a blonde whose charms, as composed by Nature, are usually, like her character, of a dreamy softness. The subject appears upon a white couch, one of her hands toys with flowers, the other has strayed coyly to her pretty little bush; voluptuous is her attitude, and unwearyingly one pores over the beauties of this sublime picture's details. Sbrigani remarked that this Venus, so it seemed to him, bore a striking resemblance to our Raimonde; I agreed. The

pretty creature blushed innocently when we reported our finding to her; from the fiery kiss I laid upon her lips she could measure my approval of my husband's comparison.

In the next room, known as the Chamber of the Idols, we found a great store of works by Titian, Paul Veronese and Guido. And in that room we saw something very curious indeed: a sepulchre overflowing cadavers severally exhibiting all the various stages of decay, from the moment of death's advent to the total material decomposition of the individual. This somber tableau is executed in wax colored so subtly and modeled so cunningly, that the thing itself could be neither more expressive of Nature nor more authentic. So powerful is the impression produced by this masterpiece, that even as you gaze at it your other senses are played upon, moans seem audible, you wrinkle your nose quite as if you could detect the evil odors of mortality. . . . These scenes of the plague appealed to my cruel imagination; and, I mused, how many persons had undergone these awful metamorphoses thanks to my wickedness? But I rove. Let me only say that Nature probably impelled me to those crimes, since even the mere recollection of them still thrills me to the core.

Nearby it is another miniature representing, in the same style, another common grave teeming with plague victims, and here the most interesting figure is a naked man who, as he drops the corpse he is carrying in among the rest, is himself overcome by the stench or overwhelmed by the sight, reels back, and dies: the treatment of this group is terrifyingly realistic.

We now came to gayer objects. The Tribunal Chamber, as it is called, contained the celebrated *Medici Venus:* and upon beholding that stunning piece a rush of emotion assailed me as surely must happen to any sensitive spectator. A Greek, they say, was smitten by passion for a statue. . . . 'Tis understandable; I could well have duplicated his distracted behavior. It is generally allowed that this statue shows us the Venus of Greekish seafarers; I need not describe it at greater length, it has been copied often enough; but though a reproduction of it is within anyone's means to buy, no-

body will ever appreciate it quite as I did. . . . This marvelous piece was once broken by some vandals, their execrable piety led them to this act of madness. The boor-fools! they worshipped the author of Nature and thought to please her by shattering her noblest work. Touching the sculptor's identity there is disagreement; common opinion ascribes the work to Praxiteles, others say Cleomenes made it: whoever the artist may have been, his creation is magnificent, it is admired, it inspires the imagination, contemplating it is one of the sweetest pleasures that can be derived from the sight of man-made things.

My eyes fell next upon *The Hermaphrodite.* As you know, the Romans, who all had a special fondness for these monsters, welcomed them into their saturnalian assemblies; the one represented here was probably among those whose erotic reputation was outstandingly notorious and hence deserved commemoration; but its legs are crossed, which is a pity, for the sculptor ought rather to have displayed what characterized its double sex and singular amenities: it is shown reclining upon a bed, exposing the most tempting ass in all the world . . . a voluptuous bottom which, as he stared at it, evoked a melancholy sigh from Sbrigani, who told me he had once had a similar creature and never been able to forget the delight it had given him.

We were shown chastity belts. "Examine those devices well," I recommended to my two sweethearts, "you shall be strapped into the like the day I have any doubts of your fidelity." To which the mild-tempered Elise delicately replied, that her devotion to me would always suffice to restrain her inside the bounds of the strictest temperance.

Next we saw a splendid collection of daggers, some of them were poisoned; nowhere has murder been refined as amongst the Italians, it is therefore quite the ordinary thing to find in their homes all sorts of instruments for murdering, in the cruellest and most traitorous manner.

The air of Florence is very unwholesome, autumn may be positively fatal there: during that season, leave a bit of bread steep in the Apennine miasmas, it will moulder invisibly and sicken anybody who tastes of it, sudden

deaths, apoplexies become very frequent at that time of year. But as we were then in early spring I considered we could remain through the summer without risk. We bedded only two nights at our inn; the third day I rented a fine house overlooking the Arno: I took it in Sbrigani's name for I was still masquerading as his wife and my two followers were become his sisters. Established there upon the same footing as at Turin and in the other Italian cities where I had made residence, no sooner had intelligence of us got abroad than the propositions began to arrive. But upon the advice of a friend of Sbrigani, who esteemed that moderation on our part and no improper eagerness to leap at offers would perhaps win us admission to the Grand Duke's secret revels, we refused all bids for a fortnight.

The prince's emissaries appeared in due course. Leopold wished to have the services of the three of us at a foregathering which would also include the everyday objects of his private orgies, and our unreserved cooperation would be worth a thousand sequins to each of us.

"Leopold's tastes are despotickal and cruel, like those of all sovereigns," his representative explained to us, "however, you have nothing to fear, yours shall be merely to serve his lusts, others will be their prey."

"We shall be at the Grand Duke's orders," I answered, "but, my good sir, for a thousand sequins . . . hardly. No, my sisters-in-law and I are only to be had for thrice that sum; come back if those terms are acceptable."

Libertine Leopold, who had already cast eyes upon us, was not the man to forego such delights because of a trifling two thousand sequins more. Miserly toward his wife, toward the poor, toward his subjects, Austria's fairest son spent generously upon his pleasures. And so we were called for the following morning and conducted to Pratolino, in the Apennines and on the road by which we had gained Florence.

That villa, shaded, solitary and voluptuous, lacked none of the features characteristic of a retreat for debauchery. The Grand Duke was finishing dinner when we arrived; with him he had only his bodyguard, the agent and confidant of his lubricities.

"Dear friends," the lord of Tuscany declared, "step

this way if you please, we are awaited by those young persons my lust is to feed upon today."

"One moment, Leopold," said I, in my voice that elevated tone of self-respect for which I have always been noted, "my sisters and I shall submit ourselves to your caprices, we shall satisfy your desires; but if, as people of your sort so frequently are, you too are given to dangerous fantasies, then say so now, my good man, for we do not intend to enter the arena unless we are sure we shall emerge from it safe and sound."

"The victims have already been appointed, they are there," the Grand Duke replied to me, "you are to be the priestesses in this affair, nothing more; and we the sacrificers."

"You heard the gentleman," I said to my companions, "in we go. Faithless knaves though they are, sovereigns may sometimes be trusted, above all when you have reliable means for vengeance about you," and casting back my sleeve I afforded Leopold a glimpse of the haft of the poignard I had been carrying ever since the day I entered Italy.

"What," cried he, laying a hand upon my shoulder, "you would attempt the life of a sovereign?"

"If provoked, of course," I rejoined. "I'll start no trouble, but if you were to forget who you were dealing with, this knife"—and I now drew it all the way into view—"will make you remember that your mistake was to behave inconsiderately toward a Frenchwoman.

"As regards your royal sacrosanctity, in my country we sneer at such rubbish. You don't suppose, do you, that the heaven that made you made your existence one whit more inviolable than that of the meanest individual in your realm? I have never considered one living creature any better than any other, and as I have no belief in moral virtues, neither do I consider that they are differentiated by any moral worth."

"But I am a king."

"The poor fellow! As if I were to be impressed by that title! Why, Leopold, you cannot guess how little it means to me. How did you get to where you are? By luck. What did you to do to merit your rank? That first

of kings who earned it through his courage or his cunning, he could perhaps claim to some esteem; but he who has it through mere inheritance, may he hope for more than compassion?"

"Regicide is a crime—"

"Disabuse yourself, my friend, your head is full of old-fashioned notions: 'tis no worse than killing a cobbler, and you do as much evil, or as little, when you squash a beetle or murder a butterfly, Nature having fashioned those insects also. You may believe it, Leopold, the manufacture of your person cost our common mother no more effort than creating a monkey, and yours would be a serious error if you let yourself imagine that she cares for this one of her children any more than for that."

It was a voluptuous salon Leopold bade us enter, and there awaiting us were the creatures he had alluded to and with whom we were about to disport; who would have believed it? they were a quartet of girls.

"What the devil do you plan to do with these articles?" I enquired of the Grand Duke.

"You shall see ere very long," he replied.

Whereupon he approached the four girls and notified them of his intentions. I need hardly tell you, my friends, that upon hearing this perfidious declaration they were all without exception plunged into the depths of distress; two fainted, the other two set to squealing like pigs being led to the slaughter. But unfeeling Leopold only commanded his agent to strip off their clothes.

"Fair ladies," the Grand Duke then said to us, "will you kindly imitate these demoiselles, and undress yourselves too? I never enjoy a woman except when she is naked; and, indeed, I suspect your bodies are pretty enough to merit being observed unveiled."

A moment later they were seven nude women Leopold was surrounded by.

We were favored by that libertine's preliminary homages. He scrutinizes us separately, he compares us, has us stand apart, brings us close together.

"I am growing very hot," he told us, "it is time we turn to more serious matters. You see there, in that brazier, four branding-irons," he continued, "they are hot too;

upon each is inscribed the sentence of one of our laden women. I shall blindfold them, each shall choose her own iron."

The ceremony over, the blindfolds were removed and the four wretches, looking round one at the other, were able to read their mutual condemnations aloud.

"Ladies," said Duke Leopold, "the price of three thousand sequins you demanded and which I agreed to pay includes the cost of your silence concerning our joint doings."

"They shall be kept secret," I replied, "but I pose one condition."

"Condition? Condition? Does it beseem you to speak thus?"

"Certainly . . . and insofar as I can bring about your downfall by divulging them, your crimes give me rights."

"Bah," stormed the bodyguard, "see what happens when you behave liberally toward these jades; one should either never let them see a thing, or cut their throats once they've seen it. Your commiseration, good my lord, is bound to be your ruin or your purse's, and I ask you, Sire, can you deign bargain with such ordures?"

"Softly," said I, "save that kind of language for the mechanicks you and your patron are doubtless accustomed to dealing with ordinarily; it is not appropriate when addressing women of our rank who, perhaps as wealthy as you," I pursued, turning to the Duke, "prostitute themselves less through greed or necessity than from taste. Let us close this discussion; his worship needs our good-will, we need his: some mutual services may redress the balance. Leopold, we will swear you the completest secrecy provided you for your part ensure us the completest impunity so long as we remain at Florence. Swear to us that no matter what we do in your duchy, we shall be made to answer for nothing."

"I dislike using such methods with women," Leopold said, "who appear to me quite as libertine as I: I grant you the dispensation you solicit—I extend to you, madame, to your sisters-in-law and to your husband as well, but for the space of six months only: that period ended, get you gone from my lands, I command it."

Having obtained all I was after, I saw no reason to reply and after thanking Leopold and receiving our fees we bade him adieu and retired.

"We must turn this jubilee to account," said Sbrigani once he had heard of our arrangement with the Grand Duke, "and before our time is up endeavor to add at least three millions to what we have already. 'Tis truly a pity our carte blanche has been delivered for us in such a bedraggled poverty-ridden part of the country; but never mind, we'll accept whatever is offered and snatch at anything that is not, and half a year should suffice to accumulate a tidy little fortune."

Morals are very free, conduct very loose in Florence. The women go about costumed as men, men as girls. In few Italian cities does one detect so decided a penchant for betraying one's own sex, and this mania the Florentines have no doubt derived from their pressing urge, indeed, from their need, to dishonor both. Incest and adultery are rampant there too, no effort is made to conceal them: husbands cede their wives, brothers lie with their sisters, fathers with their daughters.

"It's the climate," say these good people, "the climate is to blame for our depravity."

In this connection there used to be a most unusual law in Florence. On Shrove Tuesday no woman had the right to refuse her husband's abnormal advances; if nevertheless she took it into her head to say him no, and if he interpreted her refusal as a slight and grounds for complaint, 'twas very likely she would be made a laughing-stock of all over the town.

However, irregular though Florentine manners may be, street-walkers are not permitted to drift loose through that city. The whores are restricted to a separate quarter of their own whence they may not venture commercially forth and where reign the most perfect order and calm. But these girls, seldom pretty, are for the most part ill-lodged; and the philosophical observer who visits the bawdy-houses will discover nothing of any particular interest unless it be the remarkable docility of these public playthings who, only too happy to attract you by means of their resignation, present no matter what part of the

body upon simple demand and with unwearying patience even suffer each of them to be used in any manner libertine cruelty deems suitable.

And at about the same time a famous procuress came under suspicion of kidnapping maidens from middle class families and furnishing them to some Florentine noblemen. Questioned as to the names of her clients she compromised such a quantity of distinguished persons that there was no pursuing this inquest either, the dossiers had to be burnt, and the woman forbidden to say any more.

Nearly all the ladies of quality in Florence have the habit of vending their charms in brothels; their temperament and their penury bring them to it. For the legal status of married women is singularly unfavorable in Florence, perhaps worse than in any other European city, and there are few where their profligacy is more extensive or rampant. As for the *cicisbeo,* that gallant in eternal attendance upon a lady, his function is merely to provide her a screen. Those who fancy a cicisbeo is a paramour are greatly mistaken; he is simply the women's indulgent friend, or ally; may sometimes be the husband's spy; but never is his conversation with his dame criminal; and of all possible roles, this is the dreariest a man can assume in Italy. A wealthy foreigner has but to appear on the doorstep, and husband, gallant and everybody else speedily retire, leaving a clear field to him upon whose purse all hopes are founded, and I have often seen the complacent lord of the house quit it in consideration of a sequin or two when the stranger manifests the wish, howbeit slight, to hold private parley with milady.

I have inserted this brief sketch of Florentine manners in order that you apprehend in what way, touching the thieveries, the debaucheries we were meditating, we were aided and in what way hampered by the traditional usages of this people at whose expense we wanted and were free to amuse ourselves for a six-month.

Sbrigani felt that our schemes were likely to meet with fairer success if we ran up our flag over an emporium of debauchery rather than over a casino; oh perfidious greed insatiable! did we not have riches enough already with-

out striking out anew towards crime? Aye, no doubt; but once one is a traveler of crooked paths does one ever renounce them for straight?

So we circulated informations advising the public at large that gentlemen would find at any hour of the night or day, not only pretty wenches awaiting them in our establishment, but even women of the highest quality, and it was likewise made known that ladies could always obtain from us what they required in men, girls or quadrupeds for their clandestine pleasures. They were exorbitant rates we charged, but they were marvelous services we offered. Elise and Raimonde, trained in the matter, saw to the misplacement of countless pocketbooks and piece of jewelry; the protection we benefitted from was an impervious defense, rendering vain all the denunciations of our activities.

Among the first we received was the Duke of Pienza. His passion was sufficiently out of the ordinary to warrant describing. Sixteen girls the Duke must have, they were arranged by twos, each pair being distinguished by a different coiffure. These girls were naked, so was I where I reclined upon a sofa beside him; sixteen musicians, all youthful, handsome and naked also, were seated to the right. Each couple was to enter the room in turn; prior to its appearance, the Duke told me what lascivious pose or lewd act he expected from the couple, the orchestra was admitted into the secret, and 'twas from the music, its key, its tempo, its volume, its melody, the couple was to try to guess its instructions. It guessed aright? the music would stop; did they fail to divine what was required of them—and each couple had ten minutes for solving the puzzle—then when the time had expired the dunces were flogged by our libertine who, as I dare say you very well imagine, derived quite as much pleasure from their mistakes as from their correct penetration of his wishes.

For some three months had we been leading this frivolous and profitable life when I accomplished a piece of outstanding baseness and thereby added a hundred thousand crowns to our treasury.

Of all the women who frequented my house with the utmost assiduity, the wife of the Spanish ambassador was

she whose debauchery was probably the most noteworthy. Married women, maids, boys, castrates, she could find a use for anything and though young and of angelic beauty, the whore's rapacity, her foulness were such that she would insist I fetch her common laborers off the street, gravediggers and sweeps, pickpockets, flunkeys, ragpickers, and whatever else I could lay my hands on that was lowbred, and vulgar. When 'twas for women she longed then they must be sluts just risen stinking and sodden off a barracks-room floor, or worse yet if it might possibly be procured. Once closeted with the rabble I collected for her the rascal would be seven and eight hours frolicking in that leprous milieu, and then when she had had her fill of venereal pleasures turn to those of the table; and would close the day in mad riot amidst the most revolting debaucheries.

The ambassadress had a very pious husband, a very jealous one whom she gave to believe that when she went out it was to visit a friend who, like herself, was also one of my more reliable clients.

Seeing in all this certain promising possibilities, I one day betake myself to the Embassy.

"Excellency," I say to the representative of Spain, "so good and upright a man as you does not deserve to be cuckolded: the woman who bears your name is not worthy of it. Your own honesty cause you to doubt the truth of what I advance? So be it; but I entreat you, for the sake of your dignity, of your honor, of your peace of mind, Excellency, investigate the matter."

"Betrayed? I?" quoth the ambassador, "'tis unthinkable. I know my wife too well."

"Say you so, my lord? Begging your pardon, I am persuaded of the contrary, and wager you are far from having even the faintest glimmering of her appalling conduct. It needs to be seen to be believed. My object in coming here is to be of aid to you."

Florella, sore troubled, wounded by the painful suspicions I have sowed in him, hesitates before the still more painful prospect of having them confirmed. "Are you in a position, madame, to prove these allegations?"

"Today, my lord, if you so wish it," I answer. "Here is my card, I shall be expecting you towards five o'clock

this afternoon. You shall see the style in which your wife violates the trust you have in her, and the species of individuals she selects to that end."

The ambassador promises to be there.

"I am flattered, Excellency, and satisfied; however," I add, "I should like to point out to you that the favor I am doing you shall cost me dear. For 'tis I who furnish men to her, and she pays me handsomely for them—you shall punish her, I presume, and in any case I shall henceforth be deprived of her custom: I feel I am entitled to an indemnity."

"True, that is only fair," says Florella; "in what sum might it be?"

"Fifty thousand crowns?"

"This pocketbook contains that amount, I shall bring it with me and the money shall be yours when you have presented me with the necessary evidence."

"Agreed my lord. I shall expect you at five."

The several hours remaining until then was time enough to enable me to prepare further unhappiness for this ill-starred menage. The while causing the wife to fall into a trap, I was eager to snare the husband in it also; you shall soon learn by what crafty means I achieved this. After my little conference with the ambassador I went straight to call upon his wife.

"Madame," said I, "you give yourself bother on account of your husband, thinking him of stern morality and irreproachable behavior you are ever apprehensive lest, finding you out, he upbraid you. I suggest that you come to my house a little earlier than usual this afternoon, and it shall be revealed to you that conjugal ties no more prevent him from enjoying himself than they do you."

"Do you know," she replied, "I am less than entirely surprised by what you tell me, for I had an intuition he is not so sinless as he would appear; and I should be delighted to learn that my guesses have not been mistaken—"

"You shall have them confirmed today. I have six pickpockets ready for you, and I have never clapped eyes on a prettier set of ruffians. Unless they are the three young boys your husband has ordered for tonight."

"Young boys?"

"He prefers boys."

"The monster!"

"Ah ha! So indeed! And that explains his eccentricities . . . his unaccountable absences, and the handsome valets he surrounds himself by. . . . Oh Juliette, I simply must catch him out. . . . I must learn the truth—you will help me, will you not?"

"If you insist. But I am obliged to think of the future, madame. Satisfying your curiosity, I lose a client and his trade is even more profitable to me than yours."

"Never mind, I shall make your losses up to you. Set a figure, Juliette, I am willing to pay anything if it will secure me an end to my anxieties and my persecutions."

"Then fifty thousand crowns does not strike you as too much?"

"You shall have the sum—the money is in this purse, I shall have it with me. So go now, and count upon me to keep the appointment and the bargain."

The two rendezvous arranged, as for the husband's, however, that was by no means so simple to contrive. Art was called for, seduction would be necessary: the man I was dealing with was a Spaniard, a pious Spaniard. But nothing daunted me. Once the two stages were set—the two scenes were to transpire in adjoining chambers, a crack in the partition separating them would permit the husband to observe his wife's infidelities, through a second aperture the wife would see her husband's antics —I waited patiently for my two dupes.

The husband arrived first.

"My lord," I declared, "it would seem to me that in the light of your wife's behavior you ought no longer feel constrained to deny expression to your tastes nor to refuse yourself pleasures."

Florella drew himself up. "Such things—"

"You dislike them and you are quite right: the dangers are manifold when you dally with women. But Excellency, look you here, these pretty children," said I, drawing aside a curtain behind which I had stationed three delightful little boys, draped in garlands of roses and otherwise naked, "these heavenly little Ganymedes, you'll surely not maintain that sorrows are to be anticipated

from enjoying them? Really, my lord, it surpasses my understanding—you who are so ill used, will you worsen affairs by being harsh to yourself?"

And the while I spoke the sweet little trio, acting upon my instructions, surrounded the Spaniard, hugged and kissed him, teased him and despite all he could do plucked his wavering virility forth from its tent. Man is weak. The pious are weaker than most, especially when you offer them boys.

"My lord," said I once things were well under way, "I am going to leave you to your own devices; I shall return as soon as your wife has begun her wanton capers."

And I leave just in time to greet the ambassadress, then on the point of entering.

"Madame," quoth I, conducting her to the hole in the wall, "you could not have come at a better moment. Behold in what way his Excellency passes his afternoons."

And indeed the good man, without an inkling of the scurvy trick being played upon him and seduced by my speeches, was almost naked now and already absorbed in the ethereal preludes of abandon.

"The beast!" gasped the ambassadress, "the fiend! Let him dare criticize my conduct after what I have just seen —ah, I'll have a thing or two to tell him! Juliette, it is dreadful, it is horrible—*madre de Dios,* where are my men? Send in my men, I'll have my revenge, by heaven, I'll have my revenge and more beside!"

And having started Doña Florella off on her lewd routine, I rejoined her husband.

"A thousand pardons if I disturb you, Excellency," said I, "but the crucial instant is at hand and I should not like to have you miss it. Leave off your sweet sport a moment and come," I urged him, steering Florella toward the second spy-hole several feet away from the one through which he had been watched by his wife, "determine for yourself."

"Great God!" that gentleman exclaimed, clutching his brow and staggering back a pace; "with six men, and veritable scum of the earth to boot! Oh, the bitch, the harridan, the rank rammy slut! Juliette, take it, here is your money, this sight I have witnessed—I am thunderstruck, I am undone, I . . . can no more—I wish never

to hear of pleasures again. That monster in the next room has shattered my existence, slain the soul in me . . . I am in despair."

The aspect of the adventure my evil mind most appreciated was its sequel and it warmed the cockles of my very bad heart afterward to learn that the ambassadress had been stabbed to death, an event which gave rise to great commotion and folly. A hundred diplomats, the emissaries of that many rival states, promptly published colorful versions of the story and Florella was hailed before Leopold's magistrates: Unable to endure the assaults of remorse, unable to face the ignominy about to fall on his head, the Spaniard shot himself. But I had contributed nothing to this second death, I was scarcely better than its indirect cause. The thought left me frightfully downcast; let me now tell you what I undertook several days later in order to pick up my spirits and at the same time promote my fortune.

It is common knowledge that the Italians make wide use of poisons: their atrocious character finds therein a suitable vehicle of expression, and a convenient means for taking the revenge and serving the lust wherefor they have also acquired a name in the world. Sbrigani and I having exhausted the supply acquired long before from Mme. Durand, I had lately entered into the fabrication of those venoms for which she had given me the recipes: I sold these products in quantity, scores of folk consulted me for their needs, and this branch of commerce developed into an immense source of revenue.

Countess de Donis was in those days the richest, the most beautiful, the most elegant, and the most dissolute lesbian Florence could boast; it was commonly supposed I was her kept companion, and the opinion was not without some basis in fact.

Mme. de Donis was a widow of thirty-five, delightfully shaped, with a charming face, a clever mind, much wit and many talents. Libertinage and interest were the sinews of my twofold attachment to her, together we indulged in the strangest, the most reckless, the most outlandish misconduct. I had taught the Countess the art of whetting her pleasures upon the stone of cruel refine-

ments, and the whore, deriving untold benefit from my experience and instruction, was already almost a match for me in wickedness.

"O my friend," she said to me one day, "how many and various are the desires aroused by the thought of a crime! I liken it to a spark which sets swiftly alight everything combustible at hand, whose ravages increase in proportion to the fuel it finds, and which ends up producing a blaze in us such as is not to be extinguished save by rivers of fulfillment. But Juliette, methinks some theory must exist governing this as there is a theory governing everything else; I am eager to become familiar with them; teach me, my angel, you know what my dispositions, my penchants are, teach me how to regulate all this."

"Adorable woman," I replied, "I am too devoted to my pupil to leave her only halfway educated.

"They are these, beloved Countess. Whenever you have the urge to commit a crime, what are the general precautions to be observed, barring of course those particular ones which the nature of events alone must prescribe?

"Firstly, combine your scheme several days ahead of time, thoroughly revolve and ponder all its consequences, some will contain advantages for you, spy them out, look with similar care for those likely to betray you, and weight them as coolly as if it were inevitable you be found out. These persons, whoever they are, will sooner or later come looking for your victim and, not finding him, finally come looking for you: hence before you act prepare your welcome for them, your manner of replying to their questions and of imposing silence upon them if they are not satisfied with your answers. Self-interest is the prime mover of human beings; let there therefore be no doubt of it, if you neglect these precautions and the accomplice finds a greater advantage in playing you false than in keeping faith with you, then be sure of it, my dear, betray you he shall, above all if he is weak and believes avowing may be a means to clearing his conscience.

If the committed crime doubles your fortune, defer until much later the purchase of a new coach or necklace,

the changes in your circumstances made outward display of will arouse curiosity, incite comment, and bring the police round to your door.

"The deed once done, its perpetrator will be best advised, especially if he is a beginner, to avoid company for awhile, since the visage is the mirror of the soul and despite us the muscles that shape our facial expression will inevitably, try as we will to prevent it, reflect our inmost feelings. For the same reason see to it you introduce no subject of conversation which has the slightest bearing upon the deed; for if it is the first time you have committed it, you are apt, as you discuss it, to wax rather too eloquent, to say that trifle too much which will incriminate you, and if to the contrary it is one of your habitual crimes, a crime that affords you pleasure, your physiognomy will announce to others the agreeable impression made upon you by anything touching the deed.

"Employ hypocrisy, it is indispensable in this world where accepted usage is hardly to practice what you preach: crimes are rarely imputed to those who manifest a general indifference toward everything that happens.

"Be just as careful to avoid witnesses as you would be in the choice of accomplices, and whenever possible dispense with both. It is always the one or the other and often the two together who lead the criminal to the scaffold.

Very great, says Machiavelli, must be the accomplice's devotion if the personal danger he sees himself exposed to is not greater still; which proves that you must either select for your lieutenant someone related very intimately to you, or destroy him when you are finished with his services.

"Honor? What is honor? A meaningless word, of itself nothing, which for its existence depends upon the opinion of others and which, so defined, should neither flatter us when it is accorded, nor be regretted when it is lost. Let Epicurus' attitude be our own: bestowed upon us from outside, so much the better if fame and honor be ours, so much the worse if not, in this there is naught we can do save know how to get on without them when we cannot acquire them. And be ever mindful that there is no crime on earth, however modest, which does not

bring its perpetrator more pleasure than dishonor or disgrace can bring him pain.

"Such, my dear Countess, are the views I would express to a vulgar auditor. But you—your rank, your person, your wealth, your credit, in what an enviable position they place you, how they shelter you from interference and ensure your impunity. No, no, there is not a single extravagance you should refrain from, not one form of wild conduct you should not blindly indulge in.

"This has been, I know, something of a sermon; let me now indicate to you, my lovely friend, the secret of how to discover which kind of crime is likely to fit your temperament best, for you can do nothing properly unless you enjoy it. A woman of your parts and organized as you are cannot but be subject to incessant criminal impulsions; before divulging my secret, however, allow me to explain to you how I came to this conclusion about your temperament.

"Your power of feeling is extreme, but you have directed the effects of your sensibility in such sort that it can no longer move you to anything except vice. All external objects possessing some unusual feature or other provoke a prodigious irritation in the electrical particles of your neural humour, and the impact delivered to the nervous system is instantly communicated to the nerves in the vicinity of the pleasure zone; you become immediately conscious of an itch there, this prickly titillating sensation is agreeable to you, you welcome it, you cultivate it, you renew it; your imagination sets to contriving ways to intensify it, means to amplify it . . . the irritation grows ever keener, and thus, if you wish, do you multiply your enjoyments *ad infinitum*. Your sole aim and study therefore is to extend, to aggravate your sensations—need I say more? Is it not true, my beauty, that you have already and, it may well be, often found your desires far in advance of your means?"

"Oh yes, yes," sighed the ravishing Countess.

"Just as I thought. 'Tis a frightful situation, many, many is the time I have been in it too, it is the bane of my existence; but let me impart my secret.

"Go a whole fortnight without lewd occupations, divert yourself, amuse yourself at other things, for the space

of those two weeks rigorously bar every libertine thought access to your mind. At the close of the final day retire alone to your bed, calmly and in silence; lying there, summon up all those images and ideas you have banished during the fasting period just elapsed, and indolently, languidly, nonchalantly fall to performing that wanton little pollution by which nobody so cunningly arouses herself or others as you. Next, unpent your fancy, let it freely dwell upon aberrations of different sorts and of ascending magnitude; linger over the details of each, pass them all one by one in review; assure yourself that you are sovereign absolute in a world groveling at your feet. Fear of reprisals, hindrances you have none: choose what pleases you, but leave nothing out, make no exceptions; show consideration to no one whomsoever, sever every hobbling tie, abolish every check, let nothing stand in your way; leave everything to your imagination, let it pursue its bent and content yourself to follow in its train, above all avoiding any precipitate gesture: let it be your head and not your temperament that commands your fingers. Without your noticing it, from among all the various scenes you visualize one will claim your attention more energetickally than the others, and will so forcefully rivet itself in your mind that you'll be unable to dislodge it or supplant it by another. Once this is accomplished, light your bedside lamp and write out a full description of the abomination which has just inflamed you, omitting nothing that could serve to aggravate its details; and then go to sleep thinking about them. Reread your notes the next day, now turn to the definitive shaping of this idea into a scheme and as you put the final touches on it, once again incorporate all fresh episodes, novelties and ramifications that occur to you. After that, execute it, and you will find that this is the species of viciousness which suits you best and which you will carry out with the greatest delight.

"Lovely and delicious friend," I went on, remarking the warm impression my lessons were making upon her, "permit me to append yet a few more observations to the advice I have just offered you; my single interest is in your happiness."

Filled with enthusiasm by my discourse, the Countess' thousand kisses expressed her thankfulness.

"I am eager to try out your secret," said she; "let's not meet again until two weeks have passed. I swear to see no one during that interval, when it is over we shall spend a night together: I shall tell you my ideas and we shall work jointly at their realization."

As she promised, the Countess sent me word a fortnight later, I betook myself to her home and we sat down to an exquisite supper. After we had raised our spirits with dainties of all kinds and delicious wines, the servants were dismissed, the doors locked, and we shut ourselves up in a little chamber which much art and expense had turned into a veritable laboratory for erotic research.

Leaping straightway into my arms, "O Juliette," the Countess said, "I need such sensuous surroundings as these if I am to gather courage to confess what your perfidious prescriptions have brought me to. O my love, however shall I be able to reveal this horror to you! Whither are we borne by a disordered imagination! To what infernal lengths is not a weak and helpless mortal dragged by satiety, by the abandon of principles, by the atrophy of conscience, by the taste for vice, by the immoderate use of lust . . ."

"Sweet friend, delicious friend," I said to this engaging person, "you are not afraid, heaven forbid! of finding a censor in me. Far be it from me to carp at your curiosities, but I ask that it be explored to the limit and enriched by a few episodes. It strikes me that some spices could be included in the dish."

"Ah Juliette," the inspired woman pursued, "all to which my heart gives vent is naught but the fruit of your advice and instructions. This cruel but saving truth entitles me to your indulgence to what I have to say: Aglae is a daughter of my husband, that is my reason for hating her; my sentiments for her father were no less hostile, and had Nature not heeded my prayers I would have resorted to art and forced her to fulfill them . . . you catch my drift. I have another daughter, a man I worship is her father. Fontange, so is she called, the darling issue

of my passion and its token, she is now in her thirteenth year; she is in the keeping of a ward at Chaillot, by Paris. Here, Juliette," continued Mme. de Donis, handing me a bulging pocketbook, "my legitimate heirs will be deprived of these five hundred thousand francs; invest the sum in my Fontange's name when you return to France, I wish also to entrust her to you, you will look after her, you will find a suitable match for her, you will see to her welfare and happiness. But your interest in the child must appear to stem from benevolence. Otherwise all would soon be brought to light: my family would assert claims to this gift, and lawyers would contrive to get it away from my daughter. I place my confidence in you, dear Juliette: swear that you will be a loyal friend to me and keep secret both my good and my evil deeds. This pocketbook contains an added fifty thousand francs which I beg you to have the kindness to accept for yourself."

"Dear friend," I said to Mme. de Donis after sealing our pact with a kiss, "it shall be as you will it: be certain that before a year is out your beloved Fontange shall be the beneficiary of your generosity and of my devoted attentions."

The rest of the night was given over to the most frenzied lesbian exercises. And completed our arrangements to remove for several days to Prato, where the Countess had a superb estate.

Mme. de Donis announced to her mother and daughter that they were all embarking upon a long journey. For my part I was to bring Sbrigani and two thoroughly reliable valets. Thus upon the appointed day were there met at Prato a total of eight persons: there were the Countess and I, my husband and my two hirelings, Mme. de Donis' mother, her daughter and, lastly, an elderly nursemaid who had been many a year in the service of her disorders.

Aglae proved a perfectly enchanting young thing, as pretty as a picture, gracefully made, with a skin incredibly smooth and soft and fair, big blue eyes which seemed to be only waiting to come alive, faultless teeth, golden tresses. But to all that direction was lacking, it

drifted aimlessly, artlessly: The Graces had set only a caressing hand to Aglae, she yet required moulding. The impression made upon me by that heavenly girl is something beyond my power to describe it was an age since anyone had stirred me so profoundly.

And as I gazed at her a thought entered my head.

"Why not change the victim," I said to myself, "is not the commission the Countess has entrusted to me her death warrant? If I sincerely desire to steal this money —and the urge is undeniably upon me—then must I not straightway do her to death who assigned it to my safe-keeping? My purpose in coming here is to commit crimes, that which ends the daughter's days jars with my libertinage whereas another which lays her mother low will stimulate my passions just as well, and will amply content my greed into the bargain: the five hundred thousand francs will be mine, and I will be dispensed from any obligation to account for them, mine also shall be two pretty girls to use as I please."

I communicated these ideas to my husband, he applauded them and recommended that I send immediate word to my women, instructing them to pack up our belongings and to proceed with all dispatch to Rome and to await us there, for that was the city we had chosen for our next stay after our allotted term in Florence was expired. Attached to me as Elise and Raimonde were, I could expect them to comply punctually and conscientiously with my orders, and was not disappointed. The very same day I convinced Mme. de Donis that it was indispensable to clear the house of every servant and to have all she owned of gold and gems sent down to the country so that she not be entirely without resources in the event plans went somehow astray. Acclaiming the wisdom of these precautions, Mme. de Donis, in blissful ignorance of those I was taking at the same time, arranged to have all her acquaintances in Florence informed that she was gone off to Sicily and would be absent until late in the fall. Everything was settled the next day, and the Countess, ours, had received by courier six hundred thousand francs in effects, two millions in banknotes, and three thousand sequins in cash; her

whole defense consisted in one aged woman whilst my forces included, apart from Sbrigani, a pair of strapping valets.

These dispositions completed and as I was enormously relishing my idea of having the daughter commit the very crime whereof her mother wished to make her the victim, I induced the Countess to postpone all action until the following Friday.

All I said, all I asked, all I proposed was law to the Countess, such was her infatuation with me that nothing could have opened her eyes. Mme. de Donis consented to everything; Aglae was ordered to give me a warm reception in her bed, and I repaired thither that same evening. Oh my friends, what an array of charms! Suspect me neither of poetic license nor unreasoning bias, for verily I exaggerate not when I declare to you that Aglae would all alone have sufficed to him who in his search for a model ransacked all Greece and even in the one hundred loveliest women of that land failed to find the beauties he needed for the composition of the sublime Venus I admired in the Grand Duke's gallery. Fully aware of what it is I am saying, and stating it as a cold fact, I do now assure you that Aglae was the divinest creature with whom up until that time I had ever had anything carnal to do. No sooner had I brought these marvels to light than I devoured them with caresses, and in my swift passage from one to the next, each time it seemed to me that I ought to have paused longer over what I had just relinquished for something equally wonderful. Her mother's pupil, she was a veritable Sappho; but my studied languors, my voluptuous distress, my ecstatic sufferings, my twitchings, my nervous tremors, my spasms, my screams, my foul tirades, all these attributes of far-reaching corruption, all these symptoms of the havoc wrought by Nature in a body and a soul, my grimaces, my sugared, my sickly smiles and kisses, my sneaking gestures and insinuating remarks, my hoarse, lewd whisperings, all these amazed and then alarmed her gentle innocence, and she ended up avowing to me that her mother's style of enjoyment was a great deal less refined, at any rate milder, than mine. Finally,

after hours of matchless voluptuousness, to this delightful girl I spoke more or less as follows.

"Dear girl," I began, "I do not know where you stand as regards principles, nor whether the Countess, when she started to initiate you into the mysteries of pleasure, concerned herself also for the cultivation of your soul. Your mother, that most traitorous, that most unworthy, that most criminal of women, has plotted against your life—exactly, do not interrupt me—: tomorrow, Aglae, you are to be her victim unless you parry the blow: by which I mean you have no choice but to strike it first."

"Good heaven, what fearful thing do you tell me?" said Aglae, trembling in my arms.

"The truth, my dove, it is atrocious, but I could not hide it from you."

"I wonder if this could be the reason for the odd change in her attitude towards me of late . . . for her chilliness, for that treatment—"

"To what treatment do you refer?"

Aglae then disclosed to me that her mother, become cruel in her pleasure, had been tormenting her, slapping her, beating her, and taken to saying the harshest things to her.

"Dear love," I said to the maiden. "The past cannot be altered, you must ready yourself for what is to come. The fatal hour is at hand."

"But how am I to escape?"

"Of escape there can be no question. You cannot wait until the attack is delivered and then hope to dodge it; my advice to you is to take the offensive yourself."

Impressionable, delicate, sensitive, Aglae was sorely shaken by my revelation and reduced to tears by this awful deed I proposed that she do.

"My child," said I, stroking her hair as she sobbed upon my breast, "this is no time for tears, 'tis courage and determination we require. Owing to her fell designs, Madame de Donis has forfeited title to any of the consideration which might be shown a mother, and become an ordinary woman to be done quickly and remorselessly away with: to deprive them of life who threaten our own is the summit of human virtue. Come, sweet Aglae,

don't be a silly, if you owe anything to such a monster it is vengeance; can you passively turn the other cheek to insult and hope to retain your self-respect? And supposing you were to survive this present attempt, what security remains to you? Can you yet cling to the illusion that between this villain and thee there still subsists any relation save that of the hunter to his quarry?"

"You were her friend?"

"Could I continue to be once I learned that she was bent on destroying all I love in this world?"

"Your tastes and passions resemble hers."

"Perhaps; but, unlike her, I do not venerate crime; unlike her, I am not a she-wolf thirsting for blood, I abhor cruelty; I love my fellow man, and murder is an infamy that revolts me. The time for words is over, that for deeds is upon us."

"What! You would have me, Aglae, thrust a dagger into my mother's heart?"

"A mother you say? Can you call her by that name who labors at the destruction of her daughter? Why no, become your mortal enemy, this woman can only be considered a mad beast fit only for extermination."

And taking Aglae in my arms again, I strove to bury her misgivings beneath an avalanche of libertine attentions: and sure enough, she forgot her qualms by and by and, quite won over, promised everything. Guided by my pernicious reasonings, the heavenly little slut reached the stage where it dawned upon her that revenge might hold a few thrills in store for her; after that, we rose from bed.

"My friend," I said to Sbrigani, "we have now but to lay hands on the victims; call in your men and have them clap the ladies in irons."

"Monster!" I say to Mme. de Donis, "justice cries out that you be made the victim of your own wickedness."

"What's this? Perfidious wretch, was not this plot as much your handiwork as mine?"

"Ha, I put on a show of vice and so lured you into divulging your secret; but now, having you in my power, I have no further need to feign."

Aglae, stiffened in her purpose, steeled to anything

by my mingled scoldings and cajoleries, is amused by the spectacle.

Here I should say in Aglae's honor that her courage and determination wavered not once; progressing swiftly from pleasure to ecstasy, her delirium held at a frenzied pitch to the end of the operation, and it was not brief. Sbrigani devised all sorts of ingenious expedients to lengthen the ordeal.

"And that," said I, after congratulating my barbarous husband when he was done, "makes us the masters of the place; let us beat a rapid retreat. Aglae," I went on, "you presently grasp the object of my crime: as your mother's friend I had only a share of her wealth, all of it is mine now. The fires you kindled in my heart yet burn there; you know Elise and Raimonde? I mean to include you in my troupe. But along with certain pleasures this comports certain servitudes, like the others you too shall be called upon to contribute to the commonwealth, you will have to lie, cheat, steal, seduce, commit every crime, as do we when our advantage enjoins it; to rallying our colors the other alternative is abandonment and poverty. Which shall it be?"

"Oh my dear friend, I shall never quit your side," the girl exclaimed, tears in her eyes; "it is not my situation that dictates my choice, it is not fear of hardship, but my heart, and my heart belongs entirely to you."

"Juliette," my husband enquired, "what's to be done with this article now? Ere a little we could perhaps have found a buyer for her first fruits, but they have been picked and there's an end to the whore's usefulness. It's dull, I tell you, it lacks intrigue," he continued, "it lacks character, Juliette, believe me; so let us reunite what Nature originally assembled and leave this family in peace."

And here, my friends, I confess it to you, my native ferocity swept all other considerations aside, Sbrigani's pathetic appeal had stirred me as the rascal knew it would.

"You are going to go the way of your kin," I said to her, "and we are of that reprobate breed that has never bowed to any law but its passions."

Despite her shrill protests and entreaties she was delivered over to our valets.

Laden with an immense booty, Sbrigani, our two menials and I set out at once for the capital of the Papal States where we were greeted by our two girls who, with the rest of our movables, were awaiting us at the address we had given them earlier in Florence.

As we made our entry into Rome, "O Sbrigani!" I exclaimed, "here we are at last in this superb capital of the world. How instructive it is to meditate upon the strange parallel that asks to be drawn between the Rome of ancient days and this other that is contemporary. With what astonishment, and with what scorn, I am going to see the altars of Bellona and of Venus. Few ideas so exalt my imagination." I mused as I scanned the features of these modern Romans, searching for some traits reminiscent of the grandeur and glory of those erstwhile masters of the world. "Eh, what would a Cato say, or a Brutus, if he were to see a Julius, an Alexander Borgia parading his insolent pomp upon the august ashes those heroes confidently vouchsafed to the respect of later generations and the awed admiration of the universe?"

I could not resist a desire to visit St. Peter's. This monument, it cannot be denied, not only beggars description, it is far superior to anything the most fertile imagination could conceive. For magnificence the altar is quite beyond compare, isolated, set between four wreathed columns, mounting almost the full height of the church, and placed upon the very tomb of St. Peter who for all that did not die in Rome nor indeed ever show his face there.

Coming to Rome it was my belief that I ought to establish myself under altogether different colors here than those we had flown at Florence. Provided with several letters of recommendation I had obtained from the Grand Duke, and in which, as I had requested, he referred to me as a countess, and having the means to back such a title, I took a house of the sort that would silence any discussion of the legitimacy of my pretentions. My first care was to place my funds in investment. The enormous theft operated at Minski's retreat, the other lately achieved at Prato, the half a million francs

Mme. de Donis' Florange was not destined to see, my Florentine earnings, all this added to what I had amassed in the course of my tour through North Italy made up a capital yielding eight hundred thousand pounds a year; an income of sufficient size, you observe, to permit me a house rivaling anything maintained by the most brilliant princes in the entire land. Elise and Raimonde were my ladies in waiting, and Sbrigani thought it would better promote my interest if he were no longer to pass as my husband, but as my gentleman squire henceforth.

My next stop was at the palace of the beautiful Princess di Borghese, a very libertine woman whom you shall soon see taking a leading role in my adventures.

Two days later I presented myself at Count Albani's residence. Albani, the greatest debauchee in Roman Courts, and who that same afternoon must absolutely summon his painter and have him do a portrait of me in the nude, for inclusion in his gallery.

After that it was Duchess Grillo, a delightful woman gone preposterously to waste upon the gloomiest of husbands, and over whom I went fairly wild at first sight. My special acquaintances ended there, and 'tis in this charming circle you are about to behold me revive all the turbulent exploits of my youth—yes, good friends, yes, of my youth, I may employ the term, since I was then starting my twenty-fifth year. I had not as yet to complain of Nature, however; she had deteriorated none of my features, to the contrary, she had given them that look of ripeness and that definition which are regularly absent in girlhood, and I may say in all truthfulness, that if I had been considered pretty hitherto, I could now assert claims to the extremest beauty. My waist had lost nothing of its slenderness, my breasts, still fresh, round, firm, had held up miraculously. Exuberantly poised and of an agreeable fairness, my buttocks showed not a sign of the rough and lewd usage I had time and again exposed them to, the hole betwixt them was a trifle large, to be sure, but of a fine reddish brown hue, hairless, and whenever made display of certain to attract tongues; but with the aid of coquetry, ointments and craft, I could at will make all that sparkle as brightly as any virgin's new penny. Regarding my tem-

perament, it had acquired strength over the years, and was now something truly terrifying and always under the control of my mind: when got properly started, it was absolutely indefatigable. But for the purpose of setting it surely into motion I was coming to rely upon wine and spirits; my brain once spinning, I was capable of anything; I also employed opium and other love stimulants Durand had prescribed and which were on open and profuse sale in Italy. You ought never to fear irritating your lascivious appetites by such means, art is always more helpful than Nature and the one disadvantage to trying a drug is the obligation you fall under to continue taking it for the rest of your life.

The beginning of my stay at Rome was distinguished by the conquest of two women. One was Princess Borghese. It was at our first meeting her glances announced her desire that we come to a near and early acquaintance. She was thirty years of age, vivacious, engaging, foul-minded and profligate; pretty was her figure, magnificent her hair, bright were her eyes, she had imagination, a prepossessing manner.

Next, Duchess Grillo: less forward, younger, better behaved and lovelier, her bearing was a queen's, she was modest, of seemly reserve, was not so energetic as the Princess and quite lacked her imagination, but was incomparably more kindly than she, more virtuous, more sensitive. Equally taken by these two women, it goes without saying, after the brief sketches I have given of them, that whilst the one had a stimulating influence upon my mind, the other won her way immediately into my heart.

A week after our initial meeting the Princess invited me to supper at her little property just outside the city.

"We shall be alone," she told me; "everything about you intrigues me, my dear Countess, and I am determined to make the most of this promising discovery."

You will readily understand that after such advances it was not long before all ceremony was abolished between us. The weather was sultry. Following an abundant and voluptuous repast served by five charming girls in a garden where the scent of roses and jasmine combined with the sweet murmur and coolness of splashing foun-

tains, the Princess drew me off to a lonely summerhouse lost in a glade of sheltering poplars. We entered a circular room; around the wall, which was entirely sheathed by mirrors, ran a long sofa standing but six or eight inches off a floor everywhere strewn with pillows and cushions; here, in a word, was one of the prettiest temples Venus had in all Italy. We were escorted there by the young serving-girls who left us to ourselves after lighting several lamps in which perfumed oil shed a soft glow behind shades of green gauze.

"My treasure," quoth the Princess, "let us henceforward address one another by our first names; I abhor everything that reminds me of wedlock. So call me Olympia; and I may call you Juliette, eh, my angel? You will permit it?"

And the most ardent kiss was bestowed lingeringly upon my lips.

"Dear Olympia," said I, folding this bewitching creature in my arms, "what would I not permit you? When she adorned you with so many charms did not Nature accord your rights to every heart, and must you not necessarily seduce all those upon whom you bend your burning gaze?"

"You are divine, my darling Juliette, kiss me a thousand times over," said Olympia, sinking upon the sofa. "O my sweetest friend, I feel it for a certainty, yes, of nothing I have ever been so sure, we are going to do many and wonderful things together. . . . But I must tell you the truth about myself, the whole truth—oh, I tremble. . . . 'Tis that I am such a libertine; no, no, dear soul, you must not misunderstand me, I adore you—but it isn't love for you inflames me now: when possessed by lust I become immune to love, forget it completely, and 'tis only lewdness I recognize."

"O heaven!" I cried, "is it possible that in two places a full five hundred leagues apart, Nature created two so identical souls?"

"What, Juliette!" was Olympia's rapid response, "you are libertine too? If 'twere so we could pollute without loving one another, immodestly, indelicately, we could include others in our riotings—ah, let me devour you, my chit, my dove, let me kiss you quite to death; credit

satiety for all that, credit habit, credit our lavish style of living, our leisure and opulence: accustomed to denying ourselves nothing, everything now palls on us, and fools have no conception of whither one may be led by this surfeit and this apathy."

The while she chatted Olympia was undressing me, undressing herself, and no sooner were we both naked than we came to grips. Besotted by pleasure, I was easy game for the lesbian; I spring into action, roll her onto the cushions gracing that boudoir, and sprawl upon her.

"We are too few," Olympia points out to me. "Unaided, two women cannot hope to satisfy each other; we had better have my menials in, they are pretty, and they are capable."

"Don't hesitate to do so on my account, I am as fond of all that as you; I applaud any contribution to libertinage, anything that increases it is precious to my senses."

"And nothing that stirs them ought to be neglected, they cannot be subjected to effects too numerous or too strong," Olympia rejoined; "ah, those shy or skittish women, the wretched creatures," she went on, "who, experiencing no pleasure save it be inside the bounds of love and legitimacy!"

But a moment after the Princess rang for them, the five girls, too well trained to require instructions and who had doubtless been waiting nearby in expectation of the call, marched in, nude. All had lovely faces, supple, shapely bodies, and when they gathered round Olympia, which is what they did at once, it seemed to me these were the Graces frolicking about Venus.

"Juliette," the Princess said to me, "I shall sit opposite you, these five girls will turn their coordinated and knowing attentions upon you and by means of the most amorous titillations, the most lascivious postures, I shall watch I ask no more. You have no idea the pleasure it gives me to see a beautiful woman lose her head to joy: I shall let my mind rove and you may be sure it will wander far."

For pleasure, never before, I do verily believe, had I experienced the like of it. Thereupon, and now Olympia achieved the impossible, the undreamt of: she contrived

to improve the already perfect; thereupon, I say, coming from I could not tell where, the sounds of delightful music reached my ears. As though the exotic fables of the Koran were suddenly come true, I thought I had been transported into Islam's paradise and there surrounded by the houris the Prophet promises the faithful, it seemed to me their intention in caressing me was to drive me mad. Olympia was causing the swing to sway in cadence with the music; I was gone quite out of my mind between me and real existence all ties had been dissolved save that last one maintained by the profound throbbings of my joy. My ecstasy lasted an hour; then Olympia climbed into the swing. Deliciously inspired by the music, I polluted my hostess for another hour and a quarter following a short interval of repose; we resumed our pleasures and varied their form.

Olympia finally asked me, would I care to have the musicians join us?

"Aye, call them in," I said, and declared that I would like to have the entire world standing there, seeing me in this state of inordinate happiness.

"Oh my cherub, my heavenly creature," carolled Olympia, sprinkling passionate kisses upon this part of me and that, "'tis plain, you are an arrant shameless little whore, I adore you for it. That is just what every woman should be, that is what all of them are save the fools amongst them, and fools they are who do not sacrifice everything to their pleasures; fools? O Juliette, the most sacred of the laws writ in my heart is whoredom; the purpose of my life is wantonness, I should like to be a prostitute, but a cheap one.

"To be a whore—the thought burns in my brain, and sets a fever racing through my blood. I want to be hired to the most exacting libertines, I want to be obliged to employ a thousand wiles and artifices to rouse the most lethargic rakes, and to satisfy the least easy to please; I want to be their toy, their butt, their victim, let them do with me what they will, I'd gladly endure anything, everything—even tortures.

"Juliette, shall we be whores, nasty penny Do whores? Aye my dearest, let's go a-whoring, let's sell ourselves, let's get ourselves to a gutter and open ourselves to whole

passing nations. Like unto the fiery charger, I am flying to my undoing, I know it, I know it well, it is inevitable . . . and I do not care. Bah, this credit and the titles that are mine and which, favoring my misconduct, also deny it notoriety—I wouldst that all the earth be privy to the things I do, I wouldst that they might drag me like the lowliest of wretches to the fate their abandon designs them to. . . . Dost fancy I dread that fate? Such is the pass I have come to, Juliette, this is where libertinage has brought me, this is where I wish to live my life and die, I vow it to you; were I less fond of you I would be unable to declare these things to you. You would hear more? Know then that I feel I am on the eve of casting myself headlong into frightful debauchery: at this very moment the last inhibiting prejudices wither away before my eyes, the remaining restraints dissolve: I decide to prepetrate the blackest crimes, my mind is made up—and the scales drop from my eyes; I see the abyss yawning at my feet, and jubilantly I hurl myself over the brink."

"Adorable creature," I answered Olympia, lovely to behold as she delivered her impassioned speech, "endowed with such a mind . . . and with such aptitude as you have shown me, you should someday go far; I seem to find, nevertheless, that you have yet some important ground to cover. Although several years younger than you, owing to the infinitely wilder career I have pursued I may have the advantage in experience. No, no, my dear Olympia, you have still to learn whither crimes of lust may lead; you are, I wager, still unprepared to accept the horrors these misdeeds may involve—"

"Horrors," Borghese interrupted, the color mounting into her cheeks, "ah! I venture to affirm I am not in arrears upon an article which you appear to esteem so essential. I would have you know that I poisoned my first husband, the same fate awaits the second."

"Delicious woman," I murmured, hugging Olympia in my arms, "forgive me if I seemed to entertain doubts of your character; but, blessed friend, that crime you committed, this other you project, they are motivated crimes, in all likelihood justifiable, at any rate necessary. Eh! is not crime in itself delicious enough to be committed

for *no* practical purpose? Must we have an excuse for committing it? A pretext? And the tart flavor crime secretes, is that not alone sufficient to quicken our passion? Be persuaded there is nothing to do under the sun that has not been done already, nothing that is not done every day and, above all else, nothing that can conflict with the laws of a Nature who never incites us to evil save when she has need that we do it."

"Explain yourself, Juliette," asked Olympia, considerably moved by my remarks.

"Surely," I replied. "Tell me: what were the principal feelings in your soul as you set about ridding yourself of that first husband of yours?"

"The first for revenge; disgust, hate . . . and restlessness, a consuming desire to break my chains, to gain my freedom."

"And the part played by lust?"

"By lust?"

"It was silent in you?"

"Why, I did not consult it, it did not speak—"

"Well, if in days to come you should commit similar crimes, do not neglect to interrogate it as you perform. Let lust provide the spark to the tinderbox of crime; combine the one passion with the other, and you shall be staggered by the results."

"Oh Juliette," the Princess whispered, gazing at me with wide-started eyes and as though electrified by my suggestion, "the ideas you put in my head. . . . Ah, I was but a child, little did I know, less yet did I make of my opportunity—I realize it now."

I then represented to Mme. Borghese all that a libertine spirit may extract from blending cruelty and lewdness, and developed for her, upon this great subject, all the theories you are so familiar with, my friends. She had no trouble following my arguments and so rightly grasped the conclusions that it was with a reeling brain the rascal swore to me we would not take leave of one another before having jointly perpetrated a few of these voluptuous abominations.

"Oh my love," she said, and she was completely afire, "a thousand things astir inside me are telling me how heavenly it must be to rob one of our fellow creatures of

the treasure of his existence, the most precious in a human being's possession."

'Twas then, while she was in a very lather of agitation, that the musicians appeared.

Ten youths composed the band which now filed in; and incomparably pretty lads they were, swathed in filmy, transparent tunics draped in the Greekish manner.

"These are the artists who have provided the concert," the lewd creature said to me as she had them step up one by one; "first witness the pleasures I am going to taste with them, and afterwards imitate me if you care to."

Whereupon the two youngest of those winsome boys posted themselves, one by Olympia's head, who lay still sprawled upon the pillows, the other by her legs. The remaining eight split into two groups, four of them gathering behind the boy at Olympia's head, four gathering behind the boy stationed near her center. Lost in a labyrinth of delicious transports, never a word did she utter but only a few sighs, a few ecstatic moans, and all her body rippled with exquisite quiverings, like a pond over which a soft summer breeze wafts.

"So then," quoth she, rising to her feet and standing triumphantly, "are you satisfied with me?"

"Indeed," I replied, I too soiled and drunk from the pleasure the Princess' five serving-girls had been affording me while I watched her performance, "indeed, my dear, you have done tolerably well, but better yet may be done, as I intend to show you."

"I've caught you, you rascal," I said to her, "you are beginning to detect pleasure in the commotion created by pain inflicted upon others. 'Tis a favorable sign: we ought soon to be moving on to better things."

Exhausted, Olympia suggested that we restore our forces; we repaired to a gorgeously lit, luxuriously furnished dining room. A superb collection was awaiting us in a huge basket of flowers, this basket lay nested in the boughs of an orange-tree laden with fruit; when I reached for an orange I discovered it was of ice. Suchlike surprises were reserved by all the rest, everything showed the mark of the most refined taste and the most elegant sumptuousness. We were served by the girls; from where they were concealed behind a decoration the youths

charmed us now by the sounds of their melodious instruments.

Very high after our orgies, Olympia and I were shortly drunk from wines and liqueurs also.

Having neglected to tell Sbrigani I would be away overnight in the country, he and my women had been troubled by my absence and great was their relief to see me return; I assured them I was well but weary, and went straight to my bed. The following day Sbrigani, who thought of nothing but money, asked what profit did I suppose might be gleaned from this intrigue?

"It has already been worth a host of pleasures," I sighed.

"It could be worth better still," replied my serious-minded gentleman squire. "I have glanced into the matter; my informants tell me Borghese is the Prince's familiar. We must have her introduce you to his highness.

"Not at all," I assured Sbrigani; "the lofty tone, a dazzling panoply and these titles are so many supplementary means to excite lewd covetings; their ambition will be flattered to have dealings with a woman of quality, I shall be able to triple my fees."

"Ah," Sbrigani rejoined, " 'tis not a few hundred thousand francs more or less that is at stake here. I have my eyes on higher objectives."

"To do so, entry into his apartments must be gained and is there any way to achieve this unless I be summoned there upon some libertine mission?"

"Certainly not; but instead of waiting idly for an opportunity we must take the initiative, we must create the occasion as soon as we can."

As we were in the midst of this conversation a page in the service of Count de Bernis brought me a message from his master. It was an invitation to supper at Villa Albani, several hours' ride from Rome.

"Juliette," Sbrigani exhorted me, "make the most of your outing: bear it ever in mind that larcenies, fraud, imposture, those are the sole aims of our travels; to enrich ourselves, there's our sole purpose, that's our duty, and if we failed of it 'twould be unpardonable. To it all pleasures are secondary and likely to entice you into

detours; the only road we must follow is the great highway that leads to fortune."

Though no less ambitious than Sbrigani, quite as greedy for gold as he, my views concerning motives were not entirely similar to his. With me the proclivity for crime was the primary and compelling thing, and if I longed to steal it was far more for the sake of the pleasure which the act itself procured me than for lavishing money upon delights.

I arrived at the rendezvous decked out in all that art could add to the charms Nature had conferred upon me; my appearance, permit me to say it, for you abhor false modesty, was lovely in the extreme.

Rather than interrupt my story, let me refrain from describing that enchanting *campagna* which attracts visitors from all over Europe. Those antiquities, perhaps the most precious relics that survive of classical Rome, those terraced gardens, the most exquisite, the best laid out and best maintained in Italy—I should like to talk to you about them at length; but, more eager to relate facts than to trace details, I shall move directly on to events, confident that you will not be displeased by my narrative even unadorned.

Walking into Prince Albani's summer residence, great was my surprise to find Princess Borghese present there. By a window she and Bernis stood engaged in conversation; they broke it off upon seeing me enter, and came up to me.

"What a heavenly creature," Olympia declared. "Your Majesty," she went on, addressing the aged Albani, who had been staring fixedly at me ever since I descended out of my carriage, "are you not of the opinion that we have no more beautiful woman in Rome?"

Both affirmed that they believed this to be the case.

And we quit the drawing-room.

It is owing to the warm climate that the Italians customarily place their living quarters in the uppermost storeys of their houses; at this distance above the ground, they rightly suppose, the air is necessarily purer, less heavy and in better circulation. Those loggias of the Villa Albani were beyond words elegant; gauze curtains admitted the breeze while keeping out insects which

might trouble the voluptuous projects for which 'fe very plain to me, as I glanced about, that the stag been elaborately set.

Directly we were installed Olympia approached and spoke in this vein: "Juliette, recommended to these two in attestations from the Duke of Tuscany similar to the letter you brought me from that nobleman . . . with your person, with your behavior, with your attitudes of mind. My relations with these gentlemen being of the closest and most cordial sort, and knowing them quite as thoroughly and in the same way we, you and I, know each other, I have felt under no obligation to hide any of the truth from their curiosity: gratifying it, my accounts have, I believe, prepared a warm welcome for you. They desire you; I entreat you to accept their advances: these dignitaries enjoy enormous favor with the King. 'Tis through their mediation preferments, advancements, graces of every variety are to be had; nay, nothing can be obtained in Rome say through them. However easy your circumstances, seven or eight thousand sequins now and then can do you no harm: one may often enough command the means to pay the butcher and the baker, but never has one too much to spend upon one's frivolities, and especially when they are of the order of those we are addicted to. I offer you my own example, many a time have I received money from them, I still do. Bernis and his colleague, moreover, have in common a peculiar eccentricity, that of enjoying no pleasure unless it is paid for; I am certain you will appreciate this singularity. As well, I urge you to manifest the extremest indulgence toward them, nothing short of that is required with such libertines; 'tis only by dint of great art and complicated ministrations their desires may be reanimated; reserve would be misplaced here, make free with everything; I shall show you how it is done."

This speech would have surprised me less had I been more familiar with Roman manners. At any rate, if I was a little startled, I was by no means affrighted, not after the thousand and one trials I had faced intrepidly and come victoriously through in the past. Bernis, seeing that the Princess was done speaking her prologue, came forth now and addressed me in his turn.

de "We know that you are charming," said he, "intelligent and untainted by prejudices: Leopold's written testimonial is very complete, it is upheld by the report we have had from Olympia, who was not reticent either. Upon the basis of this information we allow ourselves to presume, Albani and I, that you'll not play the prude with us, and to demonstrate your good-will we would have you show yourself as much a rascal as in actual fact you are, because a woman is only truly amiable provided, I believe one may say, to the extent she is a whore. And so you will surely concur in our view, that she must be foolish indeed if when Nature gives her a taste for pleasures, she does not seek as many admirers for her charms as she may contrive to encounter men on earth."

"Gifted singer of the Vaucluse," I replied, indicating to him that I was acquainted with his charming poetry, "you who penned your attack upon libertinage with such warmth and ingenuity that the reader of your lines comes away worshipping what you condemn, one would need many more virtues that I can claim to in order to resist a man of your breed."

And squeezing his hand affectionately, "Ah, believe me," I told him, "I am yours for life and be equally certain that you will always find in me a student worthy of the great teacher who so generously deigns to make essayal of her."

The conversation became general and was soon enlivened by philosophy.

"Assuredly," Albani went on, "it is a sign of grave weakness to change one's mind as one dies. Have we not time enough to come to a few conclusions during the course of a long life? Our vigorous and lucid years should be employed choosing this or that belief, according to it should we live out our span and in it finally die. Still to be preplexed, to be in the grips of uncertainty as we enter our decline is to be heading for a frightful death."

"Precisely," said I, glad to have the opportunity of making my way of thinking known to the celebrated libertines in whose company I was, "and if the happy stoicism, which is my creed as it is yours, deprives us of

some pleasures, it spares us a good many pains in life and instructs us in how suitably to die. I know not whether it is because I am but five and twenty," I continued, "and therefore prone to behold as far off the moment when I shall be restored to the dust whereof I am made, or whether I derive my comfort and courage from my principles, but it is without the least terror I contemplate the inevitable disjunction of the molecules grouped into my existence. Quite convinced that I shall be no worse off after my life than I was before being born, I expect I shall submit to bodily disintegration just as calmly, just as impassively as when out of the earth my body was composed."

"And what lies at the source of this tranquility?" Bernis declared.

"But is that so easy as one may think?" Olympia wondered.

"It is far less difficult than some suppose," Albani replied; "but you must cut the tree at the root. If you confine yourself to lopping off branches, fresh shoots will always reappear. 'Tis during youth you must undertake the energetic eradication of prejudices inculcated in childhood."

"No, Albani, I do not feel that this operation need be numbered among those demanding any outstanding effort of a young individual provided he be normally constituted. Can general conviction transform error into truth? There was a time when nobody was willing to believe the world was round, those who had the temerity to maintain it were persecuted. How wide has been belief in witches, in ghosts, in goblins, in apparitions; has the wideness of these opinions made realities of those illusions? Of course not.

"I am only too well aware," continued Bernis, "that error is necessary to us; men must be imposed upon, to that end we are obliged to deceive them. But from this it does not follow that we ought to deceive ourselves. Before what eyes are we to unmask the idol if not before those of our friends or of philosophers who think like us?"

"In that case," said Olympia, "I should be most grateful if you would enlighten my ideas upon a point of

morality regarding which I am in uncomfortable doubt. They have droned their doctrine in my ears a thousand times, their definition has never satisfied me: it is of human freedom I am speaking; Bernis, what are your views upon this question? 'Tis your sage commentary I desire."

"I shall deliver it," said the illustrious lover of the Marquise de Pompadour, "but I request your whole attention, the matter is a rather abstract one for a woman.

"The faculty of comparing different manners of acting and of deciding which appears best to us, this is what is called *freedom*. Now, does man have or does he not have this faculty of decision? I am prepared to state that he does not and could not possibly have it. All our ideas owe their origin to physical and material causes which operate upon us independently of our will, because these causes result from our intimate organization and from the impact external objects have upon us; motives are in turn the results of these causes, and as a consequence our will is not free. Prey to conflicting motives we waver, but in the moment when the decision is taken it is not we who determine it; it is enjoined upon us, it is necessitated by the various dispositions of our organs; they always dictate the direction, we always follow their guidance, the choice between this or that alternative is never exercised by us: constantly impelled by necessity, the constant slaves of necessity, that very instant when we believe we gave the clearest demonstration of our freedom is the very one in which we were subject to the most invincible constraint. Irresolution, uncertainty allow us to believe we are free, but this fancied freedom is nothing but the moment when the scales, evenly weighted, hover in equilibrium. The decision is arrived at once one of the two sides tips, and it is not we who intrude our weight to upset the balance, it is the physical objects outside us which act upon us, which reveal us at the mercy of our surroundings, the toy of natural influences, as is the case with animals, with plants. Everything resides in the action of the neural fluid and the difference between a scoundrel and an honest man consists in naught but the greater or lesser activity of the animal spirits that compose this fluid."

"Newton skipped gingerly round this formidable difficulty, he dared neither explore it nor even venture too close to it; Fénelon, more forthright although far less learned, adds: *When I will some thing, it is in my power not to will it; when I will it not, it is in my power to will it.*

"No. If, sir, you did not do it when you willed it, that is because it was not in your power to do it and all the physical causes which inflect the scales had tipped it, this time, to the side of not doing the thing in question, and the choice was made before you arrived at a decision which simply ratified it. Therefore, sir, you were not free, and you never are. When you slip into that of the two alternatives you adopt it, it is because you could not possibly have adopted the other. 'Tis your uncertainty that blinded you, you supposed it was in your power to choose because you felt it in your power to hesitate. But this uncertainty, the physical effect of two foreign objects which present themselves simultaneously, and the freedom to choose between these two objects, here are two very different matters."

"Very well then, let us now turn to perpetrating some of this delicious evil in order to keep the habit bright and in order to dull our regrets over the evil we have done in the past," said Olympia.

"By all means," replied Bernis, "but this projected evil, in order that it delight us the more, let us perpetrate it thoughtfully and on a broad scale. Lovely Juliette," pursued the Ambassador of France, "we understand that you have two pretty girls in your house, who must certainly be as complacent as you; their beauty has been much bruited about in Rome; we feel, my colleague and I, that they should participate in this evening's libidinous revels, and invite you to send for them."

Owing to the terms I was on with Olympia, whose glances pressed me to accept this proposition, I decided I could not very well refuse it and promptly sent a servant to fetch Elise and Raimonde; the conversation now took a different turn.

"Juliette," Bernis said to me, "from the eagerness we have just manifested to become acquainted with the two notoriously attractive creatures you possess, do not rush

to the mistaken conclusion that my confrere and I are especially partial to a sex whose femininity we excuse solely upon the condition it behave in manly fashion with us. It is indeed essential we declare to you upon this chapter, that it were better we refrain from devising any scheme for amusement rather than have it come to nought as a result of your failure, or your companions', to favor us by an absolute resignation to the fantasies this statement implies."

"Truth to tell," Olympia put in, "these explanatory remarks are superfluous with Juliette, from the feats I have seen her perform in this kind I may give you every assurance that she will not disappoint you; and I have no doubt that her two familiars must, if only from the fact they are her protégées, be quite as philosophical as she."

"Good friends," said I, striving to put everyone at ease, "my keenest pleasure comes only from satisfying all their whims. If what they ask of me is commonplace, my enjoyment is mediocre; let them require the unusual, the rarified of me, and through sympathy I immediately sense the most violent desire to content them, and never have I known, no, nor conceived of any restriction in acts of libertinage, since the more they outrage polite usage and exceed the bounds of modesty and decency, the greater their contribution to my felicity."

"And all that is quite as it should be," Bernis replied, congratulating me, "and it is greatly to your credit.

"Such refusals are absurd," advanced Albani, "they prove nothing in a woman but stupidity or frigidity, and I do declare to you that to those who feel that a female can only make up for her sex by the most accommodating behavior, a frigid or stupid woman is beyond words contemptible; this is my opinion."

"Forsooth," said I, "Is not a woman a woman everywhere, and is it not extravagant for her to wish to reserve one part of her body to modesty the while consenting to make free of the others? To say this mania can ever outrage Nature, the contention is perfectly ridiculous; would Nature instil in us such a taste for it if it were offensive to her?"

"Methinks 'tis a very pretty thought you have just set

forth," said Bernis; "to this theoretical erudition I should now like us to join a little practice. Let me therefore invite you, lovely Juliette, to give us a glimpse of that throne of voluptuousness which, as has been intimated to you already, will be the unique object of our caresses and of our pleasures. With Olympia's we have been long and exhaustively acquainted; yours will suffice for the time being, will you kindly make it available."

The two men having drawn near, I promptly unveiled the shrine at which they were wont to do their worship. My skirts lifted waist-high, their examination began. As the adventure I am relating now begins to take on an indisputably serious character from here on I shall describe it in the cynically frank style which best becomes the subject.

Enchanted by the two delicious creatures I offered to their lewdness, the noblemen soon demanded to make searching investigations of the hindward beauties promised by such a pair of arresting lasses as my Elise and Raimonde. Olympia herself fluttered about them no less ardently than the men. 'Twas then I drew Albani aside and of what I said to him this is the gist:

"Princely man," I began, "you do not, I am certain, imagine that these my pretty friends and I have come here to satisfy all your brutal whims simply out of piety. You must not be misled by the figure I cut at Rome: it is the fruit of my prostitutions, they alone get me my livelihood: I do not give myself except for money, and the price I ask is not trifling."

"Bernis and I have always held a similar attitude," he told me.

"Then we should get on," said I: "indicate to me, if you please, the recompense my friends and I may expect in return for our services. Not until this matter is settled shall they be rendered."

Albani enters into whispered conference with his colleague, then both turn back to me and protest I shall be dealt with in a manner that will leave me no cause for complaint.

"Too vague, these assurances," I retort. "You are shortly going to reveal a quantity of turpitudes to me; their witness, I shall possess your secret and could com-

promise you by letting it out. You will retaliate by denouncing my conduct? But I too have enough gold to be listened to, and you will be ruined when my lawyers unmask you. For six thousand sequins apiece and your agreement to procure an audience with the Queen for me, the whole affair is arranged, the discussion ended, and nothing but pleasures will result for you from all our future relations. Few are the women who can equal me for lewdness, for easiness, for wickedness, and what my uncommonly irregular imagination will add to your joys may very possibly render them quite as incisive, complete and blissful as any mortal can hope for."

"Fair child," Bernis answered me, "you do not sell yourself cheap; but there is no refusing the wishes of such an endearing little soul, you shall have your interview."

"Excellent," said I, "out with the money and I am at your disposition."

"What, must you have it at once?"

"Right away."

"But if we were to pay you first and then you were to take it into your head to—"

"Ah," I interrupted, raising my hand, "I see you have had little experience with women of my nationality. Our forbears gave their name to the frankness we have inherited from them. A frenchwoman wishes to be sure of where she stands before concluding a bargain; but she is incapable of breaking it once she has pocketed the money."

At this Albani, upon a gesture from his confrere, ushered me into a small room, unlocked a secretary, and out of it drew bank-notes in the sum I had stipulated. One glance at that secretary and the hoard it contained was quite enough to seduce me.

"Good," said I to myself straightway I had struck upon the ruse whereby I was to appropriate that treasure, "it is all the more certain to succeed considering that the multitude of abominations these rascals are going to enact with me will prevent them from daring to prosecute me afterward."

Before Albani has time to shut up his secretary, I, taking swift advantage of the moment, sink to the floor

in a feigned swoon, and feign it so well that an alarmed Albani rushes out in search of aid. Quickly I scramble to my feet, pounce upon the bank-notes, the pocketbooks, and in one swoop make away with a million. I close the secretary. "Thanks to the hurly-burly," I assure myself, "he'll not remember whether he locked the lid or not, and finding it this way will be less apt to suspect me."

All this accomplished in less time than it takes to tell, I resume my position on the floor; in comes Albani, Olympia and Bernis on his heels. As they enter I open my eyes, fearing lest in the course of efforts to revive me they discover what is not very securely cached beneath my skirts.

"Oh 'tis nothing, 'tis nothing, I shall be quite all right," say I, fending them off, "my extreme sensitivity renders me subject to nervous cramps every now and then, I am much better now, and altogether at your orders."

Just as I had foreseen, Albani, noticing that his secretary was closed, fancied he had left it so and, rather than suspecting anything amiss, was only too happy to lead me into a delicious salon where the projected orgies were to transpire.

There we found eight new personages whose roles were of considerable importance in the mysteries about to be celebrated, and perfect Cupids all. Thus were we twelve assembled there for the amusements of the two bawdy collegians, for Olympia's participation in these goings-on was far more in the capacity of a victim than a sacrificer: libertinage, greed, ambition put her in the service of these masters, and there her employment was identical to ours.

"So now," said Bernis, "we start. Juliette, and you, Elise and Raimonde, by paying the merry price you ask for your hire we buy the right to address you as one does whores; serve us with corresponding obedience."

"That is only fair," I observed; "do you wish to see us naked?"

"Yes."

"Then will you let us have the use of a dressingroom where my companions and I may leave our clothes . . ."

We are shown to one; immediately we are alone, I divide up my bulky loot into three parcels, we each stow

one into our pockets, remove our garments and reappear nude in the circle where the noblemen are awaiting us.

"Now heed me," said Bernis. "I shall exercise the master of ceremonies' functions, Albani has consented to this; everyone will hence comply with my instructions. Kindly step forward one by one and offer those articles to our critical ponderation, the boys will then do likewise, and after having been viewed each subject will repair directly to some one, and proceed to dispose him for pleasure, in such sort that the review once concluded, we may find all in the hands of either a boy or a woman, and in full bloom."

The inaugural scene is executed: we passed from the first to the second of those libertines.

"Ah ha," Bernis declared, " 'tis only too plain we require more potent stimulants; ours, you apprehend, is a state of advanced decrepitude. Voracious is the appetite of a satiety nothing satisfied, the malady is like unto those consuming thirsts which the coolest wellwater makes only to increase. Albani is in the same case as I, look you there and see whether these accumulated efforts have worked. Let us not be disheartened, however, we may try other things and indeed we must, a stern Nature commands it."

The group formed; but our champions, deceived by their desires, deliver too light an assault upon the tabernacle, falter at its gate, and limp away in defeat and chagrin.

"Mesdames," says that great man, "since kindly treatment gets us nowhere with you, harsher methods must be resorted to. Do you know the effects of whipping? It might be that which is needed; we shall see."

With these words he seizes me while from a closet Albani brings forth an apparatus of such curious design as to deserve special description.

I was bound facing the wall and a short pace from it, my hands high above my head, my feet to the floor. Once pinioned, in front of me Bernis placed a kind of prayer-stool, but of steel, its upper rung a sword-blade, razor sharp and its edge touching my belly. Needless to say, I drew back from that menacing glaive; that is, I thrust my flanks towards Bernis; which was precisely what he

wanted me to do; never had I struck a prettier pose. Grasping a handful of withes, the lecher begins all of a sudden to thrash me. Albani advanced the infernal machine several inches nearer, I must stand firm to the storm: however, I was able to weather it without undue difficulty being, very fortunately, thoroughly enured to a ceremony which had often been my delight in the past. Those who followed me had not such a merry time of it. Elise, who replaced me in that cruel harness, screamed the whole while her flagellation lasted. Raimonde suffered a great deal too. Olympia passed valiantly through the ordeal, she was fond of whipping: this vexation would only stimulate her. Bernis now turned his withes over to Albani, we all four had a second time to undergo the operation. Wary of women after that earlier skirmish, they chose boys for their prey.

A very delicious repast it was that we were served, a very picturesque one; with your leave I shall describe it in some detail.

In the middle of a circular room stood a round table set for six; two places were occupied by the noblemen, Olympia, Raimonde, Elise and I occupied the four others. A yard or so behind our chairs was the lowest in a series of four tiered benches ringing the table concentrically, forming a kind of amphitheater. There, fifty of Rome's choicest courtesans, hidden beneath masses of flowers, gave of themselves only their behinds to be seen, in such sort that those clusters of asses peeping out from the lilacs, the pinks, the foxgloves were as though scattered about at haphazard, and provided, under the same aspect, the image of everything of the supremely delicious Nature and lasciviousness can offer. Twenty Cupids represented by pretty bardashes formed a dome overhead, and the room was lit by the tapers those little gods held in their hands. At the touch of a leven an ingenious device removed one course and brought the next on: the rim of the table where the company's plates and silverware lay, remained stationary, but the center of it sank away and would rise again with six little golden gondolas containing exquisite and most delicate viands. Six boys, provocatively garbed as so many Ganymedes, waited upon us and poured out the rare wines. Our libertines, upon

whose instructions we had dressed for the meal, expressed their wish that we unclothe ourselves again, but gradually, as the Babylonian whore used to do. Thus, when the hors-d'oeuvre were brought on it was the kerchief that was put aside, the bodice came unlaced when the omelettes arrived and so on until the fruit when the last stitch was discarded; whereupon the libertinage and nastiness increased. Dessert was served in fifteen miniature boats of green and gold porcelain. Twelve little girls of six and seven, adorned only by garlands of myrtle and roses, filled our glasses with foreign wines and liqueurs. Heads are gaily awhirl, to our libertines' spirits Bacchus restores all the energy necessary to tense the erector nerve, the disorder and uproar are at their height.

"Genial poet," said the master of the house of Bernis, "two bits of enchanting doggerel are going about Rome these days, wits attribute them to you: our guests are such persons as this form of literature is not lost upon, pray favor us with a recitation."

"They are mere paraphrases," replied Bernis, "and I am rather surprised at their publicity, for I have shown them to nobody but the Queen."

"Little wonder then if they are the talk of the town. But come, Albani, we are eager to hear them from the author."

"Certainly," said Bernis. "I have nothing to conceal from philosophers like those present. One is an adaptation of Barreaux' famous sonnet, the other of the *Ode to Priapus.*"

More electrified than ever, 'twas in a state of general and utter drunkenness the company got up from table to stagger off into another magnificent salon. There we found the fifty courtesans we had observed during the banquet, there too was the brotherhood of six little boy-servants, and the dozen dessert maidens. The delicate age of those little nymphs, their interesting faces wrought prodigiously upon our bawds; who leapt like very lions upon them. Lust sputters out both Albani and Bernis dead-drunk, tumble onto couches and are gone sound asleep in a trice. . . . We dress.

Fuddled from the orgies though I was, the idea of theft was ever clear in my head and my taste for it in

no wise dampened: I remembered that first raid into Albani's treatury had not entirely emptied it. So, telling Raimonde to distract Olympia, with Elise to help me I return for another assault upon the secretary. I locate the key, we pillage everything in sight. This second capture added to the first brings my burglaries to a total of fifteen hundred thousand francs; and we leave, Olympia having noticed nothing. Fancy, good friends, how pleased my gentleman consort was when he saw me return home laden with such a booty. Several days later, however, Olympia came knocking on my door.

"Albani has been robbed of better than a million," she informed me; "it was his niece's dowry the thieves took. Not that he suspects you, Juliette, but he wonders whether the deed, perpetrated the same day the party was held at his villa, may not have been the doing of your two companions. Do you know anything of the matter?"

And here, as was my custom, I consulted my imagination for some infernal horror to cover the one by which I had soiled myself. I had indirectly learnt that on the very eve of my visit to Villa Albani, another of his nieces, whom he had endeavored to seduce, had fled the palace to escape the threat to her virtue. I remind Olympia of that niece's abrupt departure, have her remark the coincidence, my insinuations are willingly listened to and swiftly communicated to Albani who, from weakness or from spite, perhaps simply to be revenged for a slight, straightway puts all the bloodhounds on his niece's trail. The poor girl is overtaken on the confines of the Kingdom of Naples at the very moment she has sought refuge in a Cistercian convent; arrested in that institution and from there dragged back to Rome, she is thrown into a dungeon. Sbrigani recruits witnesses to testify against her, it now but remains to establish what she has done with the money; other witnesses, they too suborned by us, give evidence that she handed all the fortune over to a certain Neapolitan who had left Rome at the same time as she, and whom, they allege, is her paramour. . . .

Throughout these and the rest of my disorders the thought of the charming Duchess di Grillo preyed ever upon my mind. No more than twenty years of age, for

the past eighteen months bound in matrimony to a man of sixty whom she detested, Honorine Grill was, carnally speaking, still as much a stranger to that old faun as the day her mother had withdrawn her from the Ursuline convent at Bologna to marry her to him. Not that the Duke had made no efforts to vanquich his wife's resistance; but up until now they had been fruitless. Only twice had I called upon the Duchess, the first time on a visit of courtesy to present my letters of recommendation, the second for the sake of once again savouring the inconceivable pleasure I experienced while in her society. This third time I went fully determined to declare my passion to her, firmly resolved to satisfy it regardless of the obstacles her virtue might put in my way.

Soon I presented myself at her residence luck smiled upon my schemes, I found the darling alone. After venturing the initial compliments I let my eyes speak; modesty bade my quarry avoid them. Catching one of the Duchess' hands, "Delicious woman," I exclaimed, "if there be a God in heaven and if he be just, then surely you are the happiest woman in all the world, as you are the most beautiful."

" 'Tis your indulgence leads you to say such things, but I am able to be fair to myself."

"Oh madame, fairness would demand that the very gods relinquish their altars to you: she who is so wonderfully deserving of a universe's homages ought to dwell nowhere save in a temple."

And I seized her other hand too, squeezed and kissed them both while speaking.

"Why do you flatter me?" asked Honorine, the color rising into her cheeks.

"Because I adore you."

"But—can women fall in love with women?"

"Eh, and why not! The greater their sensibility, the greater their capacity for worshipping the beautiful, whether it be in male or female form. Wise women shun relations with men, relations so fraught with danger . . . whilst those they may entertain with one another are so sweet—ah, my dearest Honorine, I must call you Honorine, why might I not be all at once your intimate friend . . . your lover . . . your mate?"

"Mad reckless creature," replied the Duchess, "do you actually suppose you could be all those things?"

"I am confident of it, yes," I answered heatedly as I hugged her in my arms, "yes, and above all the last of them, that shall I be par excellence if you would have it so, my angel."

And my fiery tongue glides into her mouth.

Honorine receives the kisses of love, receives it without offense and when I essay a second, 'tis love itself returns it: the freshest, the prettiest little tongue slips forth to quiver between my burning lips. My boldness grows; drawing aside the veils screening the loveliest of bosoms from sight, with impassioned caresses I assault those alabaster breasts. Stirred, Honorine bends to my will; the keenest interest fills her big blue eyes, gradually they begin to sparkle, tears of pleasure gather there, and I . . . I, like unto a Bacchante, wild, drunk from lust . . . unable to stop, unable to go fast enough, I strive to communicate to her the ardor which devours me . . .

"What are you doing?" Honorine demands, but 'tis in a sigh. "Are you not forgetting your sex and mine?"

"Ah dearest love," I rejoin, "may we not sometimes outrage Nature if thereby we discover how to render her better homage? And how unhappy we must be, alack, if we refrained from seeking compensation for the wrongs we suffer at her hands."

And, ever more enterprising, I dare loosen the ribbons of a lawn petticoat, and now have in my grasp almost all the charms whose possession I so passionately covet. Startled—electrified by my hoarse sighs and labored panting, Honorine ceases entirely to resist. I press her backward, she is now lying upon the couch. Despite the struggles of her hard-pressed virtue, some moans announce its rout; at that signal I redouble my caresses.

Nobody is more skilled than I at aiding pleasure to attain its crisis . . .

"Ah my angel, my beloved angel, I adore you," that dove says to me as she opens her eyes to the light, "you slew me with happiness. How ever can I repay you?"

"In kind, my dear, in kind," I reply, snatching off my skirts.

However, like all well-bred women, Honorine was

clumsy: she aroused desires in me, and knew not how to cope with a single one of them. I was obliged to give her lessons.

Overcome now by a desire to see her entirely nude, I raise her up, rid her of all she is wearing. . . . Oh God, this sudden splendor that met my gaze, 'twas as though I were looking upon the star of daylight when in springtime it shines through a long winter's mists. What radiant fairness! What gleaming exquisite skin, how soft! What breasts, what hips! And that waist; those incomparable buttocks! Sublime altar of love and of pleasure, not a day goes by, no, not a single day passes but my imagination dwelling yearningly upon you, as it were stretching forth its arms toward you, offers you some fresh homage . . .

Manlike in my tastes as in my thinking, how bitterly I regretted that I was unable to burn some realler incense before my idol. But the more I aroused her, the greater was my distress at being powerless to arouse her farther still.

"I would be your lover, your husband, I have told you so: I wish to have you as might a man."

"Ah, do anything with me you want," was the Duchess' gentle reply to this, "multiply the proofs of your love, in return I shall give you back twice as many tokens of mine."

Honorine wishes now to see me nude, her eyes rove over my body; but she is so newly come to pleasure that she ignores the art of giving it to me. . . . Ah, it mattered not to my flaming soul. You will also taste the despair wherein one is hurled by thwarted desires, and like me you will curse Nature for having inspired in you feelings which cannot be vindicated. . . . We fell to frolicking anew. Though not able to give each other all the relief we both needed, we nevertheless gave each other as much as we could, and upon separating promised to meet soon again.

Just two days after this scene Olympia called upon me; she had found out I had been to see the Duchess, she was jealous.

"Honorine is attractive, it cannot be denied," said she, "neither will you deny that she is stupid; I defy her ever

to give you as much pleasure as I. Moreover, Juliette, there is that husband of hers. He has a keen nose, you would be running a grave risk if he were to begin to scent this intrigue."

"Dear friend," said I to Princesse Borghese, "allow me a fortnight, I ask no more: by then I shall have made my attitude toward Honorine quite clear to you. For the time being, I shall confess this, and be reassured by it: now and then I may divert myself with virtue but only crime has the place of privilege in my heart."

"Then we shall speak no more of the matter," said the Princess, embracing me warmly; "you have said enough to dispel my fears. I shall be there when you emerge from your illusion, and I doubt not but that it will be short-lived with Grillo."

"But let us change the subject," she went on. "Were you not surprised the other day to see me play the whore as merrily as you?"

"No, truthfully, I was not," said I. "Knowing the kind of mind you have, I could expect libertinage to be your own concern."

"Come now, Juliette, be honest with me, you did rob Albani, didn't you? Have no fear, I'll not let your secret out nor reproach your deed, nor I, for I too rather incline toward little knaveries of the sort and who knows? I may have pilfered as much from those rascals as you: theft is delicious, my angel, it heats. It is base to steal for your living, delightful to steal at the behest of passion."

Such and so many were the things Olympia and I had done together that I considered I could depend upon her tact and discretion. It seems to me that one may safely confess a peccadillo to the person who acts as your collaborator in a major crime.

"That you come to know me better, this is one of my cherished aims," I told Olympia; "your conjectures flatter me: yes, I committed that theft."

"Ah yes, such words have a familiar ring to me. For it was hardly a year ago I did just about the same thing, and I am well acquainted with all the amenities which result from these breeches of good conduct.

"But my chief purpose in coming to see you is to

announce that we shall shortly be supping with the Queen; Braschi would have us participate in her appalling excesses. Appalling, I repeat, for a great Queen is to an astounding degree depraved, impious, it must be seen to be believed. Near the place where these orgies will be celebrated is the treasury-room of the palace: I know how to unbar its door: there are millions there for the taking. And trust me, Juliette, taking them will not be difficult: Her highness will not dare so much as object, not after the things we shall have been witness to. You will join me in this expedition?"

"Of course."

"I may have confidence in you?"

"Can you doubt it when the question is one of a crime?"

"Grillo must never hear anything of this, Juliette."

"Ah," said I to myself, "what extraorinary mentalities these Italian women have. Fortunate it was I came to this country."

One day, the rascal invited me to go along with her to a house hard by the Corso where, if I cared to, I might join in an altogether unusual party. We arrive; an elderly woman greets us.

"Will you be having many guests this evening?" Olympia enquired of her.

"A great many, Princess," the matron answered; "they come in drove on Sunday."

"Then let us establish ourselves," said Olympia.

We were shown to an attractive little room. Here were several low couches so placed that from them we had a clear view of the adjoining room and of the three or four whores in it.

"What might this be?" I wondered, "and what curious pleasure are you preparing for me?"

"Keep a close eye on the scene nearby," said Olympia. "In the space of the seven or eight hours we shall be here, whole legions of youths are going to put themselves in the hands of those girls. The number of patients will be all the larger since 'tis I who pay the expenses, their amusement costs these gentlemen nothing."

"Delightful," said I, "this arrangement is completely new to me, and I propose to make the most of it. Independently of the pleasure I may anticipate with the

fellows who appeal to me, there will be the other, the piquant one, of observing how the rest disport with those sluts."

"Exactly," said Mme. Borghese.

Olympia had only finished pronouncing these words when a tall poet appeared. He was a pretty young man of twenty or so, strongly made and virile; so gorgeous a prize could not but interest us, and when 'twas offered we rang the bell loudly.

"Go into the next room," says the whore upon hearing the signal, "this machine of yours will be more appreciated there than here."

I fall to. Another student, rung for by Olympia, walks in.

He and his confrere are followed by two sbirri,* doleful morose creatures, come next, and are replaced by a stream of coachmen, scullions, sweeps, hairdressers, bum-bailiffs, butchers and lackeys. So vast was this crowd, and among it so many awesome members, that I was at last obliged to beg quarter.

I groaned, picking myself wearily up, "tell me, Princess, do you play often at this game?"

"Seven or eight times a month," Olympia confessed; "I'm used to it, I never tire of it any more."

"I congratulate you; as for me, I am a wreck."

"Come, we shall bathe and sup together," said Olympia, "and tomorrow you shall be as good as new."

The Princess took me home with her, and after two hours in the bath we sat down at table, in no state to undertake anything beyond a sweet conversation.

"Dear Olympia! Among libertine women I have never encountered your superior. Ah, none so well as we apprehend that 'tis by way of the various and ascending stages of secret excesses everything else is to be attained. I am a slave of those voluptuous episodes, each day I discover I have formed some new habit as a result of them, charming habits which turn into so many little rituals, little homages one offers to one's physical nature and which are wonderfully pleasing to one's spiritual self.

"These divine flights of over-indulgence amongst which

* So are those officers denominated who stand the watch and arrest thieves in Rome.

one must not neglect to include immoderate eating and drinking, of prime necessity in that they inflame the nervous humors and consequently determine the voluptuous mood; these self-pamperings, I say, have a gradual degenerating effect and tend before long to render excesses indispensable. Now, it is in excess pleasure exists. What therefore were we better advised to do than maintain ourselves constantly in the state pleasure demands? But there are," I continued, "scores and scores of little habits, dirty and furtive ones, loathsome and ugly ones, crapulous and brutal ones, which perhaps, my gentle dove, you are still to make acquaintance of. I shall whisper them in your ear: they will prove to you that the celebrated La Mettrie was right when he said * that we humans must wallow in filth like swine and ought like them to seek pleasure in the ultimate degrees of corruption. As regards all this I have had some very singular experiences, and I shall tell you about them. I wager it has never occurred to you, for example, that by numbering two or three of the faculties of sensation one may extract astonishing things from the others; whenever you like I shall demonstrate this remarkable truth. In the meantime accept my word for it, that generally speaking 'tis when we have achieved depravation, insensibility that Nature begins to yield to us the key to her secret workings, and that it cannot be pried away from her save through outrages."

"Long have I been firmly persuaded of these maxims," Olympia replied. "But too much have I reasoned on my fancies, better would it have been by far had I never analyzed them at all; left inside their dark envelope of crime, their strangeness would doubtless affright me, but they would at least titillate me; whereas the light my philosophy sheds upon them renders them so comprehensible, so simple that they have ceased altogether to have any effect upon me."

* See his treatise on pleasure.

# TOME V

But prodigious as Mme. Borghese's libertinage might be, still it was not enough to make me forget the pure pleasures I was yet bent on tasting with sweet Honorine. Several days after our first adventure together I went to see her again. The Duchess greeted me more cordially than ever, we embraced in delightsome wise and our conversation soon came round to the joys we had recently given one another and received: the evoking of them shortly moved us to engage anew in the activities whence they had derived, as will regularly happen when a pair of women hold such parley. The weather that day was sultry; we two were alone in a lovely boudoir, stretched indolently side by side upon a broad divan; coy Honorine's defenses were swiftly overrun and a moment later, in quivering surrender, she offered me all her desire-swollen charms. How beautiful the creature was to behold . . . a thousand times daintier than Olympia, fresher, more youthful than she, artless, embellished by modesty's graces, why was it she pleased me not so much withal? Indescribable allurements of

obscenity, lewdness' fascination, divine amenites of debauchery, has Nature then invested in you some unique power to please abstractly? To sense your incredible sway, O crime, is to recognize your sovereign grandeur and to bow in acknowledgment before your rights absolute . . .

"Soon after my marriage to the Duke—I was sixteen years old at the time," said she, "I contracted a close friendship with the Marquise di Salvati, a woman twice my age, dreadfully dissolute and who had always contrived to mask her scandalous conduct behind eminently virtuous appearances. Libertine, eccentric in her tastes, pretty as an angel, Salvati enjoyed doing everything whence enjoyment can possibly be reaped; among her fondest practices was the seduction of newlywed young women whom she would enlist to be her partners in her furtive revels. Her air of reserve, her hypocritical and cunning speech, her connections, a prior acquaintance with my mother, it was by these means she established relations with me, they very soon turned into a liaison of an intimate kind. The scene transpired in Villegiatura, at the country residence of Prince Orsini near Tivoli, 'twas there we met. Our husbands were with us. Mine was no great hindrance to me: elderly and, to judge from my experience with him up until then, cold, seeming to have married me for my wealth alone, I had little care for Grillo in the pursuit of my pleasures. The Marquise's husband however, although very libertine, did not leave her to spoil in such complete idleness; his demands upon her were both fatiguing and unusual, their fulfilment required that she lie the whole of every night in his bedchamber, which did not facilitate our secret little doings. We made up for our night-time estrangement during the day, when we would wander off together in the splendid woodlands of Orsini's vast estate, and those promenades were the occasions upon which the Marquise toiled over my mind and soul, interspersing her lessons with the sweetest pleasures of feminine debauchery.

" 'The situation is this,' said Salvati the day after we had regained Rome. 'We are four. You will, if you wish, make the fifth. At our orders we have a reliable and resourceful woman of sixty years, the proprietress of a

house secluded in its location and very suitably appointed. We notify her, she straightway assembles in her house everything our lust can need, whether in male form or female, and of all this we make whatever use we wish and in completest security; what think you of this arrangement?'

"It cannot be denied, Juliette," Mme. di Grillo continued, "youthful and neglected by my husband, I was only too ready to listen to that temptress' offers. I assured her I would be with her on the very next excursion to that house, but insisted that she promise me I would encounter no men there.

" 'As you know, my husband has virtually no dealings with me at all,' said I, 'which is a further reason he would be quick to remark damages I were to do his honor.'

"All I asked, the Marquise promised, and we set forth. Seeing myself being conveyed across the Tiber and into the farthermost districts of the city, I felt a certain alarm; but contained it; we arrived. This that stood before us was a large and well-appearing house, but solitary, wrapped in silence and shadow, quite as was required by the mysteries we were about to celebrate.

"We were to traverse several suites of rooms before seeing a soul; and then, in a large antechamber, we were met by the mistress of the place. And now I was surprised by a sudden altering in the Marquise's tone: that decency, that show of sweetness and virtue gave way to language at which the lowest prostitute would have blushed.

" 'What's in the larder?' she asked.

" 'Awaiting the young lady you have brought I have four charming creatures,' the old woman told us, 'for your instructions were that I prepare her women only.'

" 'And for me what have you got ready?'

" 'Two fine Swiss Guards, strapping lads capable of giving it to you hard straight through till tomorrow.'

" 'This whore,' quoth the Marquise, and it was to me she was referring, 'would do better to join me in a meal of good beef instead of going off to fill up on gruel, but she's free to feed as she chooses. Say now,' Salvati went on, 'our sisters, are they here yet?'

" 'Only one has appeared so far,' replied the directress of the house. 'Elmire.'

"These ladies, it was explained to me, adopted false names for the sake of additional secrecy, and thereupon it was decided mine would be Rose.

" 'What is she about?'

" 'She is with the four girls I have assigned to milady.'

"At this I cast an embarrassed glance at the Marquise.

" 'Poor little silly,' she chided me, 'this is no place for shyness, we are a community and when we indulge in similar activities we act in concert, within view each of the other. Those who frolic with women group together, those who use men congregate likewise.'

" 'But I have no idea who this person might me,' I protested.

" 'Never fear, you'll get to know her. Well now, which shall it be? Here in this room to the left are men, over there to the right, women; hurry up, make your choice and I'll make the introductions.'

"I was sore troubled; I was violently eager for some men. But did I dare expose myself to all the risks that could result from my rashness? On the other hand, a new acquaintance spelled possible danger—who might this unknown woman prove to be? Would she be discreet? Would not her presence fairly paralyze me? Such were my doubts and perplexity that I stood a while not knowing which way to turn.

" 'Make up your mind,' said Salvati, catching me roughly by the arm, 'I have better things to do here than waste precious time.'

" 'Very well,' said I, heaving a sigh, 'I'll go in with the women.'

"The directress rapped on the door.

" 'One moment," replied a muffled voice from within.

"A few minutes later the door was opened by a young girl and we entered.

"The Marquise's companion, she whom we designated as Elmire, was yet a beautiful woman at forty-five and after anxiously scanning her face I decided we were perfect strangers. But great heaven, in what disorder I found her! Setting out to paint the effigy of license and im-

purity one would have had but to copy what was already drawn in this wild creature's visage. She was sprawled stark naked upon an ottoman. Her face was flushed, her glittering eyes stared fixedly, her long tresses floated loose over her degraded breast, spittle dribbled from her mouth. The two or three words she mumbled suggested she might be drunk; and from the untidiness in the room, the litter of glasses and bottles, I concluded that such indeed she must be.

"'I leave her to you,' the Marquise told her friend, 'they're waiting for me in the other side of the hall. Take good care of Rose, she has lots of things to learn.' And the next instant she was gone.

"The door is no sooner shut behind her than the four girls spring upon me and in the twinkle of an eye have me as naked as themselves. I shall not describe what those women did to me, it would be too afflicting to my modesty; I need merely say that libertinage and impudence were carried to the extreme. The middleaged lady amused herself with me, amused herself in front of me; when my turn came I did with her and with each of the four girls every last thing that entered my head; Elmire took pleasure surprising me, teasing me, goading me on, shocking me. One might truthfully say that her greatest charm consisted in presenting lust to me under its filthiest shapes and most peculiar colors in order to contaminate my mind and corrupt my heart. Day came at long last, the Marquise reappeared, we dressed and promptly returned each to her house in the fervent hope that nothing would dissuade our husbands from continuing in the belief that their wives had spent the evening at a ball; and their lordships never doubted but that this was the truth. Cheered by this first success, I allowed myself to be led a second time to that dreadful establishment; seduced by the pernicious Marquise, I very shortly turned from women to men and my misbehavior was without equal or precedent. Remorse finally fastened upon my soul; virtue cried out to me and I returned gratefully into its fold; I vowed to live as befits an honest woman and as such would I still be living were it not for you, whose graces and talents and adorableness and

beauty must cause all the frail oaths that shall ever be foolishly sworn to goodness, to shatter all into pieces upon the altars of Love."

"Charming women," said I to the Duchess, "a virtuous vow, why, pronounced by you 'tis an extravagance for which Nature is bound to chasten you; 'tis not for honest living she created us, my dear; we outrage her by defying her purposes. If that delicious house still exists I beseech you to return to it; never am I envious of my friends' pleasures, I ask no more than permission to share or behold them."

"No, the woman who ran that house sold it a year or so ago and has left Rome," Honorine said, "but there are other means for obtaining pleasure."

"And why not exploit them?"

"I feel less and less free, my husband is taking a constantly growing interest in me, he is becoming jealous; I am even afraid he has begun to suspect there is something between you and me."

"Such a man must be got rid of."

"Got rid of!"

"Bah, put out of the way."

"Why, you make me shudder!"

"You have no cause to shudder. Men are put out of the way and got properly rid of every day. Honorine, such prejudices are grotesquely unbecoming, you should be above them. He who intends to be happy on earth must without any scruple fling aside everything, absolutely everything that stands in his path, he must embrace everything that serves or flatters his passions . . . You lack the means? I can provide them."

"What horrors do you speak!" cried the Duchess. "I do not love Monsieur di Grillo, I shall not pretend the contrary; but I respect him; he is my youth's protector; his jealousy is my safeguard, for otherwise, if unrestrained, I would rush headlong into the pitfalls towards which it is certain that libertinage would lead me—"

"Pshaw, child, you talk nonsense," I interrupted, "all sophistry and weakness. Are you trying to tell me that because somebody prevents you from seizing the joys of life Nature holds out to you, you ought, instead of putting a halt to his interference, to double the weight of

the shackles he loads upon you? Ah Honorine, stand fearlessly up, break those humiliating chains. First of all, you must get yourself a child, never mind who sires it on you, you need issue if you are to secure control over your husband's fortune. That once accomplished, we feed the funny fellow a well-spiced cup of consommé.

That prudish spirit proved stubbornly unresponsive to my teachings; this was perhaps the only woman I had ever failed to corrupt. The moment came when I lost patience and abandoned my efforts; that was the moment I took the resolve to destroy her.

The question now was simply of disposing my guns to best advantage; I went to consult Borghese.

"I thought you were in love with the Duchess," Olympia teased.

"What an idea, I in love! My heart has always been a stranger to puerile sentiments: I have amused myself with that woman, done everything humanly possible to guide her into crime, she refused to be bed, it's a wretched fool I intend at present to send to her doom."

"I perfectly understand. It should not be difficult."

"No, it should not be, except that I want her husband to perish with her; I had projected his death, I wanted to put the dagger into his wife's hand and have her wield it against him—must the idiot's refusal cost me a victim?"

"Rascal!"

"Both of them have to be killed."

"The idea pleases me," said Borghese, "The act would amuse me as much as you; bring them to my country house and we shall see what we can do."

Arrangements are made for the party, Borghese and I harmonize our plans. I shall not bother you with the details but move directly to the outcome.

Along with us we had taken a young man of the Princess' acquaintance. Quite as seductive as he was comely, no less clever than witty, our Dolni, twenty years old. From the very first moment Dolni set to work and with great art aroused the passions of Honorine and the jealous suspicions of her husband. The deeply disturbed Grillo turned to me in quest of a friendly ear and poured out all his fears; these, as you may imagine, I did rather more to increase than allay.

"My good Duke," said I to that fool, "I am greatly surprised that you have been so slow to notice your wife's behavior. I or indeed any other could have enlightened you long ago, but one is sometimes reluctant to become the bearer of evil tidings; you seemed so well protected by your blindness, it is so cruel to blast such illusions; I held my peace. Dolni's purpose for being here is the Duchess' presence, as everybody is well aware; why, I had hardly been overnight in Rome when I heard of their affair."

"Then it is an affair?"

"To put it mildly, my lord. But I see that you still entertain doubts, and they can be more painful than the naked truth itself. It is in the morning or while you are out taking a walk that Dolni ordinarily dishonors your bed: catch the two culprits in the act tomorrow, and for your honor's sake be not laggardly in revenging yourself for a so brazen affront."

"You will aid me, madame?"

"In so far as I am able to. A word of advice: beware of speaking of this to the Princess: intimately connected with your wife, privy to her passion—it is notorious—, I believe she connives at what is going on under her roof."

"Not a word to her then. Tomorrow morning I shall be hidden in the dressing-room adjoining the bedchamber."

Lest we be overseen in conversation together we separate at once, I having recommended to the Duke that he avoid me the whole of that day. I seek out the Duchess and encouraging her to banish all scruples in order to enjoy to the full the pleasures at whose mere thought the young man has already made her giddy, I notify her that the Duke means to go a-hunting the next day, which will enable her to pass the entire morning in riot with Dolni.

"Get started early, the two of you, and when you are well under way I'll arrive and we shall carry on as a trio."

My proposal fetched gay laughter from the Duchess, and she assented to it right gladly. The moment drew

nigh; thinking the two lovers properly at grips, I bade the Duke follow me on to the stage.

"So then, good sir," said I, directing his attention to the couple, "is this less than you require to be convinced?"

Furious Grillo, drawn dagger in hand, hurls himself upon the two adulterers. Aiding his arm, I see to it the blow falls upon his faithless spouse: the blade sinks deep into her flank, the Duke would now vent his rage upon the lover, but nimble Dolni rolls away, springs to his feet, scampers from the room, Grillo hotly in his pursuit. They race down a long corridor . . . at its farther end two trap doors open, one dropping the young man into an underground passage, where he is safe, the other tumbling Grillo into the works of a frightful machine fitted with a thousand sharp blades for carving to ribbons whatever is placed inside it.

"Great God, what is this? what have I done?" cries the Duke, "oh hideous snare! Diabolical knaves, all your design was to trick me! And you, dearest wife, I was mistaken, they deceived me—you were seduced, at bottom you are innocent—"

"Come spend the day with me tomorrow," Olympia suggested when we had returned to the city, "I shall introduce you to the personage who has offered me a hundred thousand crowns to burn down all the hospitals and alms-houses in Rome. The man who is to attend to the lighting of the fires will be there too."

"La, do you still have that horror on your mind, Princess?"

"Certainly, Juliette. You confine your activity to upsetting households whereas I make mine felt by at least half a city. Incendiary Nero is my model; I too would like to stand on my balcony, a lyre in my hand, and while singing gaze forth upon my native land become a pyre to my countrymen."

"Olympia, you are a monster."

"Oh, not so great a one as you; the base scheme that brought the Grillos to their end was absolutely typical of your invention, I'd never have dreamt up the like."

At Borghese Palace the next day Olympia presented

her guests to me. "The first of these gentlemen"—it was to the elder she alluded—"is Prince Ghigi; he is today at the head of the Roman police; the proposed fire I mentioned to you yesterday will benefit him, and the hundred thousand crowns fee he is to pay me is part of his investment in a very profitable venture. And here is Count Bracciani who, as Europe's foremost physician, is to conduct the operation. Juliette," Olympia added in a lowered tone, "both are friends of mine; I implore you to take their eventual requests of you into kindly consideration."

"You shall not be embarrassed by my behavior," I assured her.

And the Princess having given the strictest orders that we be left undisturbed, conversation was engaged.

"I am having you dine," said Olympia, "with one of the most famous scoundrels to come out of France in generations; she has been giving us Romans daily examples of very high proficiency in crime; her presence need not hinder you, my friends, in the forthcoming discussions of the one we are preparing."

"Verily, madame," said the master of the police, "you here qualify as crime an altogether unpretentious and certainly very comprehensible act. I consider charitable institutions the most baneful things a large city can contain; they drain the people's energy, they soften its fibre, they promote sloth; they are in every sense pernicious; the needy individual is to the State as the parasite branch is to the peach-tree; it causes it to wither, drinks its sap and bears no fruit."

"But," Olympia interrupted, "should we do away with all laws in an empire?"

"Restored to a state of Nature, mankind, I affirm would be happier than it can possibly be under the absurd yoke of law. I am opposed to man's renunciation of a single ounce of his capacities. He has no need of laws for his self-protection; in him Nature put the necessary instincts and energy for that; taking the law into his own hands he will always obtain a speedier, purer, more incisive, stronger-brewed justice than anything to be in a courtroom, for his act of personal justice will be determined by his personal interest and the hurt he has personally

sustained, whereas the laws of a people are never other than the mass and the result of the interests of all the lawmakers who cooperate in erecting those laws."

"But without the laws you will be oppressed."

"Pish, that matters not to me if I have the right to repay oppression in kind: I prefer to be oppressed by a neighbor whom I can oppress in my turn, than to be oppressed by the law before which I am helpless."

"But not everyone will wield it appropriately, and iniquity will become general—"

"Impossible. I go farther, I grant you that, without laws, the sum of crime increases, that without laws, the world has turned into one great volcano belching forth an uninterrupted spew of execrable crimes; and I tell you this situation is preferable, far preferable to what we have at present. I envisage a perpetual outpouring of conflict, injury and aggression; it is nothing beside what takes place under the rule of law, for the law often smites the innocent and to the total of victims produced by the criminal must be added the mass of those produced by legal miscarriage and iniquity: to be sure, we will have those crime sacrifices; but the ravages of the law will be a thing of the past. Invested with the right to do his own revenging, the oppressed man will proceed with speed, diligence, economy and certitude to punish his oppressor and none other."

"But crime is a plague to the world, the more laws there are, the fewer crimes shall there be."

" 'Tis a pretty jest. But seriousness commands us to recognize that it's the multitude of laws that is responsible for this multitude of crimes.

"Cease to believe such-and-such a deed is criminal; make no laws to repress it; the crime disappears.

"Well, great deeds are frequently very necessary; virtues never are. Brutus, the kindly head of his family, would have been but a dull and melancholy fellow; Brutus the murderer of Caesar simultaneously performs a crime and a great deed: the former personage would have remained unknown to history, the latter became one of its heroes."

"And so, according to you, one may feel at complete ease amidst the blackest crimes?"

" 'Tis in virtuous surroundings comfort is impossible since it is clear that you then exist in an unnatural situation, in a state contrary to the Nature which cannot exist, renew herself, preserve her energy and vitality save through the immensity of human crimes; and so the best course for us is to endeavor to make virtues out of all human vices, and vices out of all human virtues."

"It has been to that end," said Bracciani, "that I have toiled since the age of fifteen, and I may truthfully report that I have enjoyed every minute of my career."

"My friend," Olympia said Ghigi, "with the ethical beliefs you have just laid before us you must have very lively passions. You are forty, 'tis the age when they speak most imperiously. Oh yes, you have surely achieved horrors!"

"There is no denying it," said Ghigi, "I am in an exceeding favorable position for doing evil, and it would be yet harder to claim that I let pass many occasions for doing it."

"You commit injustices . . . you suborn witnesses, you falsify evidence," asked Mme. di Borghese, "you use the instruments entrusted to you to doom a good many innocent persons?"

"Prince," said Olympia to the first magistrate of Rome's police, "you are accused of making much too extensive use of the strappado; you apply it, they say, to numerous innocents and especially to them, prolonging the torture, so we commonly hear, to the point where it invariably costs the guiltless party his life."

"I am going to elucidate the enigma," said Bracciani. "The torture you mention composes this scoundrel's pleasures; he stiffens watching it exercised, he discharges if it does for the patient."

"Count," Ghigi retorted, "I fail to notice anything constraining you to celebrate my tastes here, nor do I recall having charged you to unveil my foibles."

"We are much obliged to the Count for this disclosure," I put in with vivacity; " 'tis to announce glad tidings to Olympia, for from such a man much can be expected, and I will frankly confess that what he has reported has already touched me deeply."

"And we should be yet more deeply touched," said

Olympia, "were Ghigi to care to enact his favorite game before us."

"Why not," the libertine replied; "have you an object to hand?"

"I'll have no difficulty finding one."

"Yes, but it may not have all the required qualities?"

"What might the required qualities be?"

"Those of material indigence," said Ghigi, "of blamelessness, of the submisiveness due to a supreme judge."

"Are you able to combine all that?" Olympia asked.

"Oh yes," the magistrate assured her, "my prisons are teeming with such individuals and at your demand, less than an hour I'll have produced you something suitable to the pleasures you intend to procure yourselves."

Therewith Ghigi rose to his feet and went to issue the necessary orders. A little garden ringed by dense cypress trees and adjoining Olympia's boudoir was chosen for the place of execution, and we fondled one another while waiting for the merriment to begin. Ghigi and Olympia were thoroughly acquainted with each other, but Bracciani had never had anything to do with my friend and I was unknown to either of the men. So the Princess took it upon herself to make the initial advances; such libertines never stand long on ceremony. The hussy sets straight to undressing me but soon turns me over naked to my two admirers. They devour me, but in the Italian style. After fifteen minutes of these nasty preliminaries some order is restored. Bracciani approaches Olympia who has just cast aside her every stitch, and I become Ghigi's prey.

"Be not impatient, charming creature," that infamous libertine says to me, "my capacity for pleasure dulled from long habituation to its sensations, it will take time, I may weary you, and it may be that I finally fail to do myself honor; but you shall have given me pleasure, and that, I ween, is quite enough for any woman to strive after."

"How divine it is," I exclaimed to Olympia, "to perform such pieces of mischief! Inexplicable and mysterious Nature, if 'tis true these evil acts outrage thee, why makest me thou to delight in them?"

Ghigi wished for yet another glimpse of my body, de-

claring that his interest in it was positively indefatigable. So he and I, Bracciani and Olympia removed into the secret sanctuary of the Princess' pleasures where further infamies were celebrated and, upon my honor, I blush at describing them to you. That accursed Borghese was prone to the most outlandish practices. An eunuch, an hermaphrodite, a dwarf, an eighty-year-old woman, a turkey, a small ape, a very big mastiff, a she-goat and a little boy of four, the great-grandchild of the old woman were the lust-objects presented us by the Princess' duenna.

"Great God," I cried at beholding this menagerie, "what depravation!"

"Aye, it's the most natural thing in the world," Bracciani reminded me; "as you wear out one pleasure you are obliged to look for another; this leads far. Tired of commonplace things, you desire unusual ones, and that is why crime becomes the final station of lust. I know not, Juliette, what use you will find for these bizarre objects, but you may be certain that the Princess, my friend Prince and Magistrate Ghigi and I shall enjoy ourselves mightily among them."

"Why, I must simply accommodate myself," said I; "you'll never see me hang back where it is a question of debauchery or incongruities."

Even as I was speaking, the mastiff, doubtless trained in the trick, began to snuffle.

"Ah ha! Lucifer is under way," said Olympia with a laugh.

"There's a fine fellow," said Ghigi; "you're going to see my lord Lucifer deal as handsomely with me as he has with Juliette. Extremely libertine in his tastes, this charming animal honors beauty wherever it is to be found: but I propose to do more than dreamily endure an assault."

"Now watch me," said Bracciani, stepping to the fore, "I shall put on a different spectacle for you."

The rest of the day was spent in more or less similar lewd doings.

Five months had I been in Rome and finally I received a gallant little note from Bernis who besought me to come to him early the following morning, he would present me to His Highness who, though he would fain have

seen me long ere this, had been unable to satisfy his desire until now. I was advised to array myself simply but at the same time with elegance, and to avoid all perfumes. "Braschi, like Henry IV," Bernis wrote, "prefers that each thing smell as it should smell; he abominates art, stands fast for Nature. Hence it is essential that you abstain even from the bidet."

Obedient in all these points, I reached the palace by ten o'clock.

"Repose yourself," Braschi said to me. "In this place of ease I forget distances, and smiling upon vice when it appears in shapes as amiable as yours, I permit it to sit at virtue's side."

"Brazen fraud," I said to that old despot, "you are so in the habit of deceiving others that you seek even to deceive yourself. What the devil is this prattle of virtue when your sole purpose in bringing me here is to sully yourself with vice?"

"I am not of those who can be soiled, dear girl," the King replied to me, "and I am not even a man when for a moment I adopt human failings."

After letting loose a burst of ungovernable laughter I cried, "enough of this insolent haughtiness, desist, I say, you are speaking to a woman who is philosopher enough to appreciate you; with your leave we shall look a little into your power and your pretensions.

"In Galilee, Braschi, there develops a religion, its bases are these: poverty, equality, and hatred of the rich. The principles of this sacred doctrine are, that it is just as impossible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven as for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle; that the rich man is damned simply because he is rich. To the disciples of this cult it is forbidden ever to lay up provision, they are commanded to forsake all that they have."

"Well then, I would now have you tell me what relation there can be between these primitive institutions and the tremendous wealth you accumulate here in Italy. Is is the Evangile or the knavery of your predecessors that has put you in possession of these boundless riches? Poor fellow! and do you fancy you can still impose upon us?"

"I repeat it to you, Braschi, all that is being eclipsed, it is passing away; and forsooth, my dear Emperor, is it not staggering to see to what point superstition can denature the simplest things. Agree with me, that one is hard put to know which one ought most to admire, the prodigious blindness of whole peoples, or the gigantic effrontery of those who dupe them. Certain political interests conspired to aid the growth of superstition's child. During the years of the Roman Empire's decline, its chiefs, occupied in costly and very remote wars, were constrained to deal tactfully with you, knowing you in possession of the minds of the people; shutting their eyes to your enterprises they unwittingly promoted the destruction of their Empire; through ignorance, the barbarian hordes adopted the political system of the Emperors, and that is how, little by little, you became the masters of a fair part of the European peoples."

"The fifteenth century brought a shift in the wind, the dawning of philosophy heralded superstition's downfall; clouds lifted."

"Braschi," said I, "thou art surprised at my wit and learning; know that it is thus all the children in my country are nowadays brought up: the age of error is past. Act accordingly, old despot, having freed populations from the oath of fealty that bound them to sovereigns, free them now from error's dungeons where thou holdest them prisoner."

"Juliette," Braschi said, "they did indeed tell me you were a clever girl, but you outdo all reports; such loftiness of ideas is extremely rare in a woman. 'Tis not with you feigning were best, I drop the mask; behold the man, behold him who is set on enjoying you and who shall not haggle over the price."

"Listen to me," I replied, "it is not to play the vestal I have come here, and since I let myself be enticed into the most mysterious recesses of your palace you must surely be aware I have no intention of resisting you; but instead of getting a congenial partner, an ardent woman, someone of flesh and bone, with an intuition into your tastes, a fondness for them, you'll have naught but a stone statue unless you grant me three things, and they are these:

"To begin with I demand, as a first mark of trust, that you give me the keys to your most secret chambers; I wish to visit every nook, every cranny, to see all of what each contains.

"Then that inside several days you give me a lavish supper with Albani, Bernis, and my friend Princess Borghese, that at this supper there sparkle more lewdness and glitter, more libertinage than was ever displayed, the occasion must be gayer a thousand times and for infamy a thousand times richer than the feast Alexander VI had served to Lucrezia."

"Forsooth," said Braschi, "these are passing strange conditions."

"Either you accept them or never in your life shall you possess me."

"Young woman, you seem not to realize that I have you in my power, and that at a mere word from me—"

"I know that you are a tyrant," I interrupted, "that you are base and a knave, cruel and wicked: without those qualities, 'tis obvious, you'd not be in the post you hold; but forasmuch as I am no less a rascal than you, you love me. You love me, Braschi. It makes you glad to see to what point wickedness of your own sort can fill the soul of a woman; I am your joy, mighty Braschi, and you shall be mine, little Braschi; you shall satisfy me."

"O Juliette," he said unto me, folding me in his arms, "you are a most uncommon creature, your genius is irresistible, I shall be your slave; with the mind that appears to be yours, I am in expectation of very piquant pleasures from you, of enormities. Here, the keys, they are on this ring . . . take them, go visit my abode; after I have received your favors I promise you the dissertation you want."

"Of course; but I'd starve to death."

"And what necessity is there that you live? Is it so urgent that, for the sake of your digestion, fifty million people wander in error?"

"Yes, because my existence means everything to me, and those fifty million people nothing; because the foremost of Nature's laws is of self-preservation . . . at the expense of no matter whom."

"You are showing your true colors, Braschi, that is all I was after. So let us shake hands, since we're a pair of rogues each as bad as the other, and henceforth an end to all shamming; agreed?"

"Excellent," said Braschi, "we'll concern ourselves with pleasures only."

"Very well," I rejoined, "start by carrying out one of your promises; get me a guide, I wish to tour this place."

"I shall guide you through it myself," said Braschi.

"This superb palace," he told me as we walked along, "stands on the site of an ancient one in whose gardens the alleyways were illuminated at night by the bodies of the early Christians; Nero had them spaced at regular intervals and daubed with pitch. They served as flares."

"Oh, my friend, such a spectacle were made for eyes like mine, a joyous sight it would have been."

"But how else would you have princes reign? Their power is seated upon mere opinion; let it change and they are undone. Their one means for stabilizing it consists in terrorizing the public, in putting fear into hearts and a cloud over vision in order that pygmies appear as giants."

"Ah Braschi, I have told you so already, the people are coming to their senses; the days of the tyrants are numbered; the sceptres they hold and the irons they impose, 'twill all be shattered upon the altars of Liberty, as the cedar topples before the North Wind's blast. Far too long has despotism deprived them of their rights, the people must inevitably reach out and take them back, a general revolution must inevitably rage over all Europe; all must come tumbling down, shrines and thrones with it, and space must be cleared for the energy of a Brutus and the virtues of a Cato."

We were still walking. "A thorough visit of these buildings is no mean undertaking," Braschi said. I said to Braschi, "another monument to your pride?"

"'Tis an emblem," the Prince explained, "of unlimited power."

"Your Highness," said I, "surrender these emblems, put a whip in your gatekeeper's hand, bare your venerable ass for a beating and summon in a painter, you'll at least have the merit of auguring true."

We went next into the library built in the form of a T. In that library there were a great many cupboards, but few books on display.

"Everything is false in your house," I pointed out to Braschi; "you keep three out of four of these bookcases sealed shut lest it be seen they are empty. Deception and fraudulence is everywhere your motto."

Upon one of those shelves I found a manuscript of Terence where drawings of the masks to be worn by the actors precede each of the plays. As well, much to my satisfaction, I came across the original letters Henry VIII wrote to Anne Boleyn, the slut with whom he was in love and whom he married; memorable period of the Reformation in England.

After this we traversed the gardens where groves of orange-trees and myrtle were growing and fountains played.

"The other part of the palace, and it is there our tour will end," Braschi said to me, "is used as a preserve for lust-objects in the one sex and in the other; they are lodged behind bars; some will appear at the supper I have promised you."

"Ah Braschi," said I, full of enthusiasm, "so you keep things in cages, do you? I trust it is rather a hard life they lead? Do you whip a little?"

"One inevitably becomes severe as one gets on in years," good Braschi admitted; "for a man of my age there is no sweeter pleasure; I confess that I prefer it to all the rest."

"My friend, let us not forget the treasures I am to examine. You must have gold, your greed is legendary; I share that vice and would fain plunge my hands into heaps of those gleaming fresh-minted coins that are so agreeable to the touch and to the eye."

"We are not for from where they are stored," said he, leading me down an obscure passageway. We came to a small iron door, he opened it. "Everything is here," my guide continued, ushering me into a vaulted chamber in the center of which were chests containing, in crowns and sequins, between fifty and sixty millions at the very most.

"If there is to be nothing hereditary about your tiara,"

said I, "you are great dupes to amass riches in this world; had I been in your place I would have dilapidated the funds long ago. Scatter money to your friends, multiply your pleasures, enjoy yourself without stint, far better that than to leave these sums to accumulate for the conquerors' taking, since overthrown you shall be. I foretell it to you now, one free nation or several in confederacy, ridded of monarchical impediment, shall attack and defeat you. What's to be taken from here?"

"A thousand sequins."

"A thousand sequins! The miserly beggar! I'll fill my pockets and let's see whether I cannot get out of here with three times my weight in gold; you can hardly pay a woman less who has merits like mine."

So saying I began to scoop up handfuls of coins.

"Stay, my dear, you shall fatigue yourself to no purpose; instead, let me give you a certificate for, let us say, ten thousand sequins redeemable upon presentation to my treasurer."

"Such an act of generosity touches me very little," said I, "'tis upon Venus you place these stakes."

And as we were leaving that treasure-room, the subdued light favoring my preconceived design, I succeeded in taking an imprint of the key with a bit of wax I had brought for that purpose; Braschi, occupied with his own thoughts, noticed nothing; and we retraced our steps to the apartment in which he had received me.

"Juliette," said he when we were arrived there, "although but one of your conditions has been fulfilled so far, you must be content with me; let us now see whether I shall be content with you."

And at this the bawd unties my skirt-strings.

"But," say I, "what of the rest?"

"Since I kept my word on the first article, Juliette, you need not doubt that I shall do as much on the others."

The old rake already had me at his disposition; I was bent forward over a sofa while he, the froll fellow, one knee on the floor, was peering narrowly at what seemed to be of extreme interest to him.

"Braschi, with you I accept the accomplice's role, but I decline that of victim." But completely in control

of his passions, the bawd roused them without giving them any final outlet.

"You are delicious," he affirmed. "Let us dine."

We were but two at table, and we conducted ourselves like perfect swine. For lewdness there are few people in this world who can compare with Braschi; there are none more schooled in the finer points of debauchery. His is a delicate stomach; he would not touch certain food until it had been prepared for eating; after wetting each morsel with my saliva I would feed it into his mouth, in my mouth were rinsed the wines he afterward drank.

"O Braschi," I exclaimed during a moment of lucidity, "what would they say, the people upon whom you professionally impose, if they could see you in the midst of this?"

"They would express for me the same contempt I have for them," Braschi answered, "and despite their pride they would own to their absurdity. But no matter! let's continue to dazzle and dupe them: the reign of error shall someday come to its end, we must enjoy it while it lasts."

"Why yes, yes indeed." I concurred, "let us fuddle and fool mankind, it asks for no greater service . . .

"The invisible chain which links all physical beings together, the absolute interdependence of the three kingdoms, animal, mineral and vegetal, proves that all three are in the same case as regards Nature, that all three are resultant of her primary laws, but neither created nor necessary.

"In all living beings the principle of life is no other than that of death; at the same time we receive the one we receive the other, we nourish both within us, side by side. At the instant we call death, everything seems to dissolve; we are led to think so by the excessive change that appears to have been brought about in this portion of matter which no longer seems animate. But this death is only imaginary, it exists figuratively but in no other way. Matter, deprived of the other portion of matter which communicated movement to it, is not destroyed for that; it merely abandons its form, it decays—

and in decaying proves that it is not inert—; it enriches the soil, fertilizes it, and serves in the regeneration of the other kingdoms as well of its own. There is, in the final analysis, no essential difference between this first life we receive and this second, which is the one we call death. For the first is caused by a forming of some of the matter which renews and reorganizes itself within the entrails of mother earth. Thus does exhausted matter re-enter the regenerating womb, there to refertilize particles of ethereal matter which, but for it, would remain in their apparent inertia. And there in brief is the whole science of the laws of these three kingdoms, laws which exist apart from Nature, independently of her, laws which they received at their first emergence into being, laws which thwart this Nature's will to erupt anew; there in brief are the sole means through which the laws inherent in these kingdoms operate.

"An ancient philosopher called war the mother of all things. Ah, unhappy mortal! boast not that thou art able to destroy, 'tis there something far beyond forces; thou canst alter forms, thou art helpless to annihilate them; of the substance of Nature, not by one grain can thou lessen its mass, how wouldst thou destroy since all that is, is eternal?

"O Juliette, bear it ever in mind that there is no real destruction, that death is itself nothing of the sort, that, physically and philosophically viewed, it is only a further modification of the matter in which the active principle or, if you like, the principle of motion acts without interruption although in a less apparent manner.

"The principle of life is but the result of the four elements in combination; with death, the combination dissolves, each element returning entire into its own sphere, ready to enter new combinations when the laws of the kingdoms summon them forth; it is only the whole that changes form, the parts remain intact, and from parts joined anew to the whole, new beings are forever being recomposed.

"Ah, do we not see, do we not sense that crime pleases Nature, since 'tis according to this factor alone she regulates the amount of delight to provide us when we com-

mit a crime. The more frightful it is, the more we enjoy it; the blacker, the fouler it is, the more we are thrilled by it. "Once again: death is nothing more than a formal variation resulting in no loss* whatsoever to the law of the three kingdoms nor to the law of Nature, but redounding prodigiously to their benefit.

"O height of fearful injustice, wild animals may exist, such as the lion, the wolf, the tiger who live from murdering alone; in so living these animals disobey no laws, and there are other animals to be met with in the world who to satisfy another passion than hunger, indulge in the same excesses—and these other animals, so it is claimed, commit crimes!

"Such are the laws of Nature, Juliette; such are the only laws she has ever dictated, the only ones which are precious to her, the only ones we should never transgress.

" 'O Thou,' so should we speak to her, 'Thou, unreasoning and reasonless force whereof I find myself the involuntary result, Thou who hurled me into this world with the desire that I offend Thee, and who hast however denied me the means so to do, inspire in my blazing soul some crimes which woud serve Thee better than these poor melancholy things Thou hast put inside my reach."

"Adorable philosopher!" I cried, flinging my arms round Braschi's neck, "never has anyone dealt with this important matter in the way you have done; never has it been so precisely, so thoroughly, so plausibly explained."

We removed into the secret garden.

Enormous screens surrounded the foilage; it was completely shut off from the rest of the palace. Twenty girls and another twenty boys were disposed on tiered benches

* Matter, in fine, does not destroy itself to change form and assume new modification, any more than does, as Voltaire says (and it is from him this note is extracted), a cube of wax you melt into a round puddle smash in changing shape. Nothing less out of the ordinary than these perpetual ressurrections, and there is nothing stranger in being born twice than once. Wherever you bend your glance in the world, you encounter resurrection; caterpillars resuscitate as butterflies, an orange-pip you plant resuscitates as an orange-tree.

backed against each of the four sides of the arena. Braschi and I reclined upon an ottoman situated on a stage raised ten feet above the ground, access to which was had by a stairway whose steps were covered by a magnificent Turkish carpet; this stage was large enough to provide easy accommodation to twenty persons at least. Various costumes both gallant and picturesque adorned the men, but that worn by the women was too delicious not to merit particular description. They wore a shift of unbleached muslin, fitting loosely, negligently to their figure, hiding none of it; and had a pink collarette around the neck. The tunic I have just spoken of was, by means of a broad bow of the same pink, gathered up in behind and left the flanks absolutely exposed; over this shift each had on a blue taffeta simar which, falling in ample folds back over the shoulders, shaded nothing in front; their hair floated in free tresses; upon her head each wore a simple crown of roses.

Six girls and six pretty boys press round us, making flashing display of their bodies; we fell back exhausted amidst that crowd of celestial playthings surrounding us.

Braschi was bent on having me pass the rest of the night with him, the libertine adored me.

"You are firm," he declared, "and that is how I like a woman to be. Among them you do not have many rivals."

"Princess Borghese surpasses me," I replied.

"Far from it," he retorted, "she is forever having fits of remorse. A week from today," he continued, "I shall give you the supper I have promised; the Princess will be there, and all your friends. Believe that I am sincere, beloved child, when I say that I hope we shall achieve horrors exceeding anything we have accomplished this evening."

"I too look forward to the occasion," I said politely, having in mind the theft I was planning to operate on my next visit to the palace, "yes, I am in expectation of great things."

Braschi, who had been rubbing himself with a spirituous lotion meant to stimulate, proposed that we return to our tricks.

When he fell asleep, I was sore tempted to take this

opportunity to steal everything I could carry out of his treasury; I knew the way thither, he had shown it me himself, I would encounter no guards. But this project having been concerted with Olympia, I did not want to cheat her of the pleasure of participating in it; moreover, Elise and Raimonde were to be along and between the four of us we would be able to get away with that much more booty.

To avoid the monotony of details I shall not tarry long over those of the new orgies we celebrated there. Thirty virgin girls, between the ages of seven and fourteen and each more beautiful than the other, were violated. Albani, Bernis and Braschi gorged themselves on drink and infamy, bibbled themselves senseless, and when finally they were, that was the moment we chose, Olympia, Elise, Raimonde and I, to slip away and pillage the treasury. We made off with twenty thousand sequins which Sbrigani, posted nearby with a few trusty individuals, had transported straight to the Princess' home where, the next day, we divided the loot. Braschi never noticed the theft, or else deemed best to feign not to have noticed it. I did not see His Majesty again. In view of these circumstances I saw no reason to remain on in Rome, indeed, it seemed wiser to leave; Olympia was desolated when she heard the news; but part we must, despite the strain, and at the beginning of winter I set forth for Naples with a packet of letters of recommendation to the royal family, to Prince Franceville, to every other grandee and high-bred figure in Naples. My funds I left in the hands of Roman bankers.

We traveled in an excellent coach, Sbrigani, my women and I, four mounted valets were escorting us when between Fondi and Minturno, where the road follows the Gulf of Gaeta and at some twelve or fifteen leagues from Naples, ten horsemen appeared toward dusk. Pistol in hand, they proposed that we quit the highway and come have a talk with Captain Brisatesta who, honestly retired in a castle overlooking the bay, did not suffer gentlefolk traveling in the land to pass so near his dwelling without gratifying him with a visit.

"Comrade," quoth Sbrigani to the officer, "I have always heard it said that rascals get on together; if you

exercise the profession in one way, we exercise it in another, and both of us are engaged in dupery.

"You will tell all that to my captain," this lieutenant replied, "as for me, I simply obey orders and especially when my life depends upon it; march."

As the riders had been tying our valets to the tails of their horses during this exchange, we found ourselves without anything further to add. We advanced. The officer had climbed into our carriage and four of his men were driving it. For five hours we continued thus, and it was during that time our guide informed us that Captain Brisatesta was the most famous brigand in all Italy.

"He has," said the lieutenant, "twelve hundred men enrolled, and our detachments roam the Papal States as far north as Trentino and southward to landsend in Calabria. Brisatesta's wealth is colossal. He made a journey to Paris last year and while there espoused the charming lady who today does the honors of the house."

"Brother," I said to the bandit, "it would seem to me that the honors of a thief's house must not be very onerous."

"I beg your pardon," the officer returned, "madame's employment is more considerable than one might think: 'tis she who cuts the captives' throats, and I assure you she acquits herself in a thoroughly conscientious and commendable manner, you will be enchanted to die by her hand."

"Ah, I see," said I, "that then is what you call doing the honors of the house—you are not reassuring, sir officer. And is the Captain presently at home, or shall we have dealings with madame alone?"

"You will find them both at home. Brisatesta has just now returned from an expedition into Hither Calabria which cost us a few men but which was worth a great deal of money. Since then our pay has tripled; he always pays us according to his means; he'd give us ten ounces a day if his earnings permitted it. But here we are," the officer said, "I am sorry that darkness prevents you from seeing the location in which this superb house is set. Down below is the sea, we turn upward to reach the castle which cannot be approached otherwise than on

foot; we must therefore alight. From now on the path mounts steeply."

It was about midnight when we arrived; the Captain and his dame were in bed, they were wakened. Brisatesta came at once to examine the catch. His was a striking appearance. He stood five feet ten inches tall, was in the flower of his manhood, his face was exceedingly handsome and at the same time exceedingly harsh. He cast a quick piercing glance at the men in our party, his eyes lingered only a little longer upon each one of us women; his brusk manner, his fierce stare made us tremble. He spoke a few words to the officer; the men were immediately led off in one direction, our trunks and belongings borne off in another. My friends and I were cast into a lightless dungeon, where after groping about we found some straw; there we lay ourselves wearily down, rather to bewail our ill-fortune than seek the repose our horrible situation denied us. What cruel thoughts assailed us then, how were our souls not tried! The anguishing recollection of our past pleasures rose to mind, and only made our present plight seem darker. From dwelling upon our state of affairs we could deduce nothing but melancholy presumptions; thus tormented by the past, terrified by the present, shuddering at the future, the blood hardly ran at all through our feverish veins.

"I am far from repenting or even regretting anything I have ever done; of all those deeds there is not one I am not prepared to commit afresh, granted the chance; it is over being deprived of my capacities I grieve, and not over the results obtained from them when they were in my possession. Ah Raimonde, you do not realize the grip vice exerts upon a soul like mine! Methinks howbeit we need not be afraid, for we are in the hands of vice: much greater would be my dread were we prisoners of the frightful goddess men dare call Justice. Though I've not yet met her, I like what I have heard about this Madame Brisatesta; I wager we shall please her; we'll make her discharge; and she'll not kill us. Come here, Raimonde, and you too, dear Elise, and since the only pleasure remaining to us is frigging, let us enjoy it."

Stirred by my speech and my fingers, the little minxes

fell to playing; Nature served us just as well in this hour of grim adversity as in bygone days of prosperity. Never had I been so rocked, so whelmed by pleasure; but the return to reason was frightful.

"We are going to be slaughtered like sheep," I said to my companions, "we are going to die like dogs, it is useless to delude ourselves, death is the fate in store for us. And it is not death that I dread, I am philosopher enough to be very sure that I'll be no more unhappy after vegetating a few years on earth than I was before I got here; no, it is pain I dread, these scoundrels are going to make me suffer; they will perhaps enjoy torturing me as I have enjoyed torturing others; this captain has an evil look to me, he has long moustaches, a bad sign, and . . . and his wife is probably as cruel as he . . . Oh, a moment ago I was full of confidence, whilst now I quake."

"Madame," Elise spoke up, "deep inside me there is a hope, I know not what it is, but your teachings put me at ease. It is according to the eternal laws of Nature, you have told me so, that crime triumph and virtue be humbled; I place my trust in that immutable decree; ah, dear mistress, it shall spare us from disaster."

We were in the midst of such discussions when a gaoler, of more forbidding aspect even than his master, unlocked the door and handed us a plate of beans.

"Here," said he in a guttural voice," don't waste any, it's all you're going to get."

"What," I demanded, "is it then to be of hunger we are to die?"

"No, for from what I hear you're to be done in tomorrow."

"But, dear fellow, you do perhaps know what kind of death is being prepared for us?"

"It'll depend on what madame's fancy happens to be, our Captain leaves all that up to her; she does whatever she likes; but, you being women, your death ought to be milder than the one the men in your party shall have to face, for Madame Brisatesta is not very sanguinary except with men. She enjoys them first; then, when she's tired of them, she puts 'em out of their misery."

"And this does not arouse her husband's jealousy?"

"Not at all, he does the same with women, when he's finished amusing himself with them he turns 'em over to his wife who pronounces this or that sort of a sentence and usually executes it herself if the Captain is no longer in the mood for such pleasures."

"Your master seldom kills?"

"Hardly at all. You see, he's done so much slaughtering in his time! He's tired of it. Adieu," said the churl, fitting the key into the lock, "I must be getting on my way, I have others to serve; we are kept pretty busy here; thanks to heaven, the house is always full, you've no idea the number of prisoners we take—"

"Comrade," Said I, "our belongings—are they safe?"

"Safe and sound in storage. You'll not be seeing them again, but don't worry, nothing is ever lost around here, we are very careful about that."

And the door clanged shut behind him. Through a slot between the bars a weak ray of light entered the dungeon, 'twas enough to enable us to see each other's faces.

After a moment I spoke to Elise. "Well, my dear, does that no suffice to dash whatever hope you have?"

"Not entirely," was the amiable girl's answer to me, "I cling to it in spite of all. Let us eat and not despair."

That meager repast was barely finished when our warden reappeared.

"They are calling for you in the council chamber," h informed us. "You won't be kept waiting, it's for today."

We trudged after him.

It was a long room we entered at one end. At the other was a table, behind it a woman sat writing. Without looking up she signaled for us to approach; then, laying aside her quill, she raised her eyes and ordered us to reply to the questions she was about to ask . . . oh, my friends! what expressions can I find to convey my surprise. This woman about to interrogate me, this consort of the most wicked of all Italy's brigands, it was Clairwil—my precious Clairwil, whom I found again under these incredible circumstances. I could contain myself no longer; I rushed into her arms.

"Whom do I behold? cried Clairwil. "What! Juliette,

is it you? Oh tenderest friend, let me kiss you and may this which would have been one of sorrow for any other, become a day of rejoicing for you!"

The multitude of feelings that beset my soul, the conflict between them, their vivacity and heat cast me into a veritable stupor. When I opened my eyes again I found myself in an excellent bed, surrounded by my women and Clairwil who were vying for the pleasure of comforting me and giving me the care my state required.

"Long lost and dearest heart, I have you back again," said my friend of olden days, "what happiness this is for me! I have already told my husband who it is destiny has brought under our roof; your servants, your effects, everything shall be restored to you, we ask only that you spend a few days with us; our style of life will cause you no alarm, I know you to have principles, and to be immune to scandal; what we achieved together in the past permits me to suppose that you will find this a sympathetic atmosphere."

"Oh Clairwil, your friend is ever the same," I exclaimed; "my mind has matured with age, and the progress I have made is of a sort that only renders me worthier of you; I joyfully await the spectacles you prepare for me: we shall enjoy these pleasures together. But you, dear angel, where have you been? What have you done? Ah, we have been separated for ages; what lucky star has led us both to this place?"

"You shall have all the particulars," Clairwil assured me; "but I want you to begin by calming yourself, by recovering your serenity, by accepting our apologies for having given you such a poor welcome. You are going to see my husband, I venture to predict you will take very kindly to him . . . O Juliette, recognize the hand of Nature; she has always championed the cause of vice, she does so again, as you see."

Brisatesta arrived just as his wife concluded this speech. Whether because the situation had altered or because my now tranquil spirits caused me to view things with a different eye, this brigand no longer struck me as so frightening; scrutinizing him attentively, I found him extremely attractive; and so in truth he was.

"You have got yourself a fine husband," I congratulated my friend.

"Look well at his face, Juliette," Clairwil replied, "And tell me if you think they are none but the bonds of wedlock that unite us."

"You bear a strange likeness to one another, 'tis true."

"This splendid fellow, O Juliette, he is my brother; events had separated us, a journey he made last year brought him back to me. Marriage reinforced our ties; we wish them to be indissoluble."

"And indissoluble they shall be," said the Captain, "for when two people resemble each other so perfectly, when their inclinations, their morals so completely conform, 'tis madness ever to part."

"You are a couple of rascals," said I, "there shall never be any absolution for you; were you in my place, just come from Rome, all these sins would make you quake unto the soul, and the fear of never being able to purge them would prevent you from persevering in your wickedness."

"Let us dine, Juliette," said my friend, "you can finish your sermon over dessert." Then, opening the door to an adjoining room, "There," she went on, "are your possessions, your servants, there is your Sbrigani; be ye all of good cheer in this house, become its friends and when you have gone away from here, make it known abroad that the charms of sweet amity have their faithful even in a den of crime and depravity."

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